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No. 31

January, 1897

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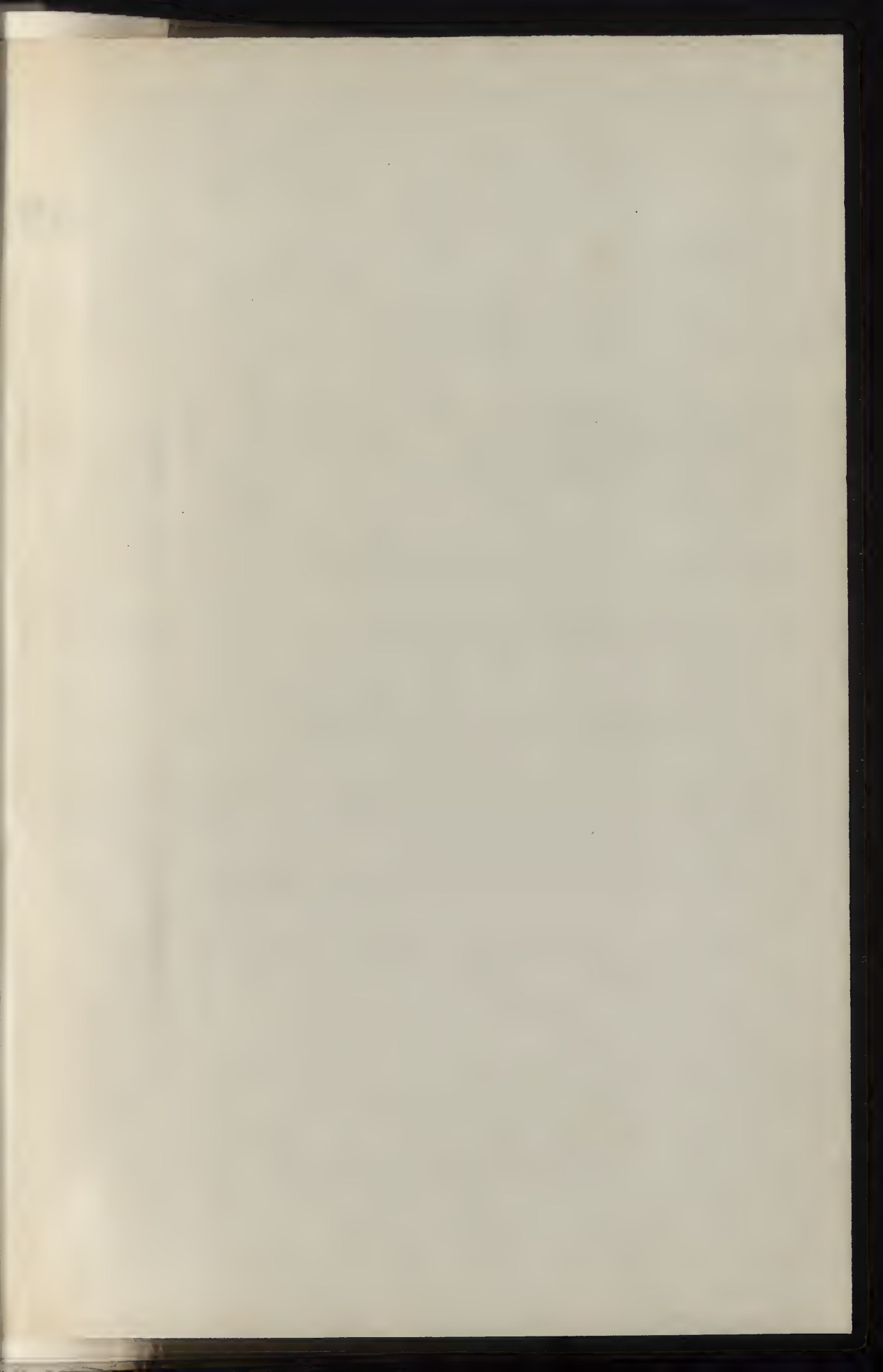
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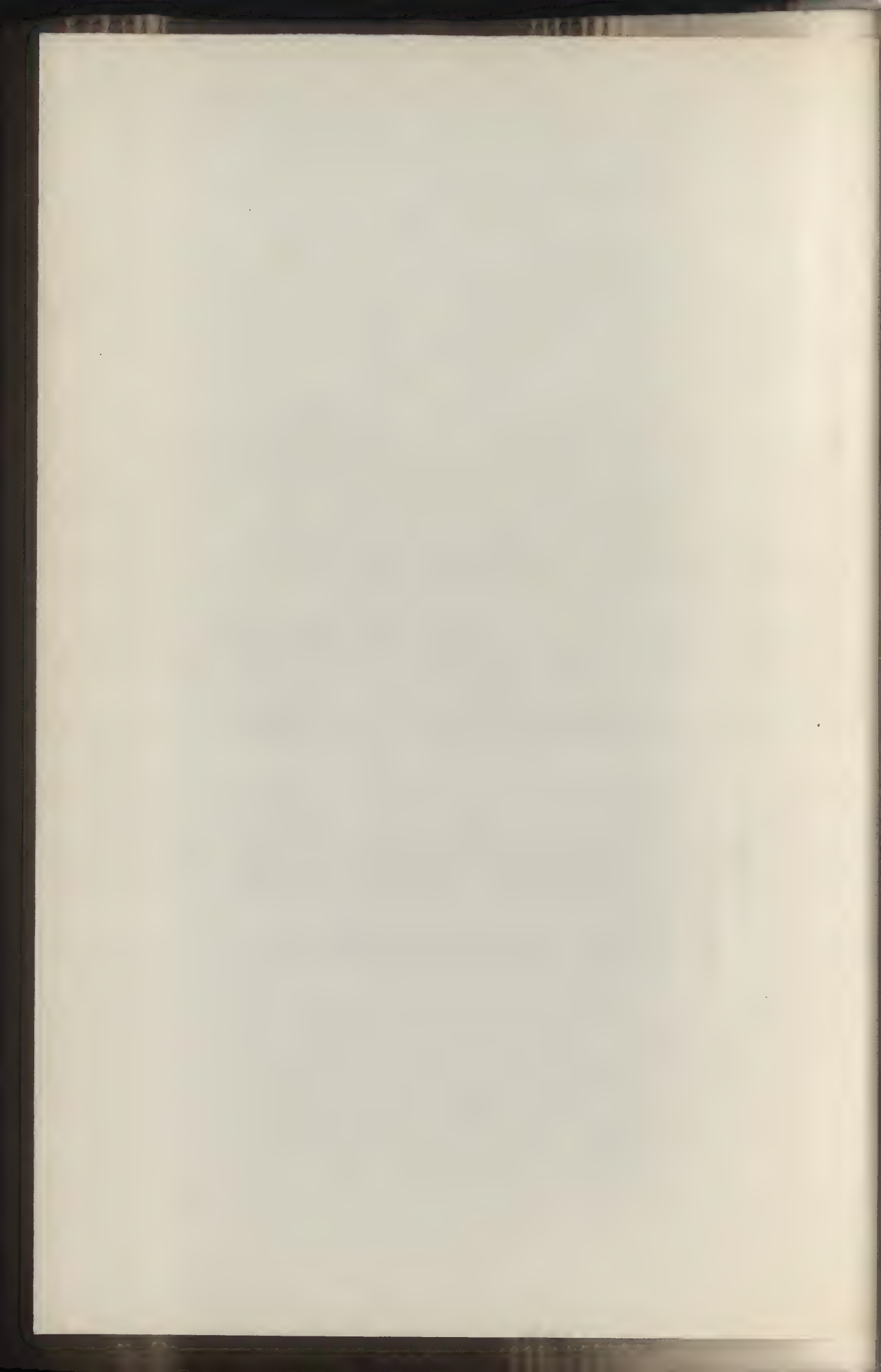




J. Dürer, pinx. *J. A. Stein, pth.* *J. C. Schenk, del.*

Lucas Baumgärtner





THE
PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS
OF ALBRECHT DÜRER

By

LIONEL CUST

Director of the National Portrait Gallery

Late of the Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum

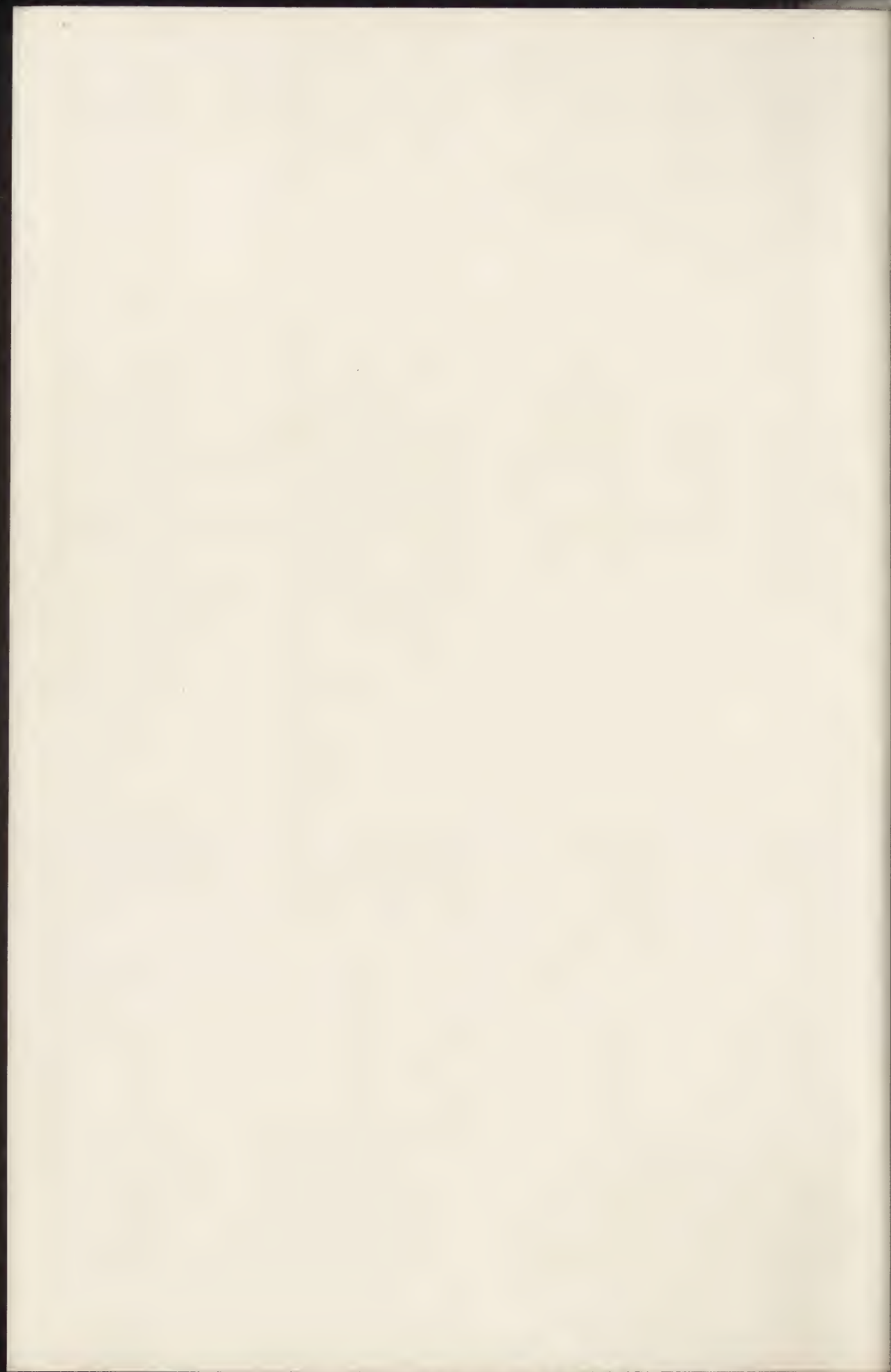


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1897



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PREFACE

THIS monograph is supplementary to one published in November 1894, and entitled "The Engravings of Albrecht Dürer." In neither case has it been the writer's intention to give a critical study of Dürer's work, a task, indeed, which would occupy a far greater space than these monographs allow. An appreciation or historical study of Dürer's work has rather been intended ; and if this should lead any reader to a nearer acquaintance with one of the most instructive and companionable of artists, the writer's object will have been attained. In the following pages a certain amount of repetition from the preceding monograph has been unavoidable, but it has been used as sparingly as possible. The drawings selected for reproduction are from the collection in the British Museum.

ERRATA IN FORMER MONOGRAPH

On page 19, line 16, for *within* read *into*.

„ 49, „ 9, for *But* read *And*.

„ 64, footnote 1, reference was made in error to “Anton Springer, Albert Dürer, Berlin 1892.” The reference should have been to C. von Lützow, *Geschichte der deutschen Kupferstiches und Holzschnittes* (1891), p. 108.

„ 74, line 19, for *nihil a* read *nihil humani a*.

THE PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS OF ALBRECHT DÜRER

CHAPTER I

Introduction—German art in the Middle Ages—Influence of the Church—Rise of art at Nuremberg—Pleydenwurff and Wolgemut—Early Nuremberg school—Dürer apprenticed to Wolgemut—The “Schatzbehalter” and “Weltchronik.”

IN a former number of the *Portfolio* (November 1894) an attempt was made to lay before the reader a short sketch of the life of Albrecht Dürer of Nuremberg, and to give a descriptive, and to some extent explanatory, account of his engravings on copper and on wood.

The limits of space contained in the volumes of this series made it necessary to confine the contents of the number in question to the engraved work of Albrecht Dürer, and to pass over, with little more than a mere allusion, that very large and important portion of his life-work which has survived to posterity in his paintings and drawings.

The engraved work of Albrecht Dürer is that which has appealed, and will probably continue to appeal, most strongly to the attention and sympathy of the art-student, especially in England. In the first place, it is accessible to everybody in every collection of engravings which has any pretensions to be complete; and in the second place it is capable of reproduction in these days in such exact facsimile that it is hardly

necessary for the student, who does not desire to be an expert, to have recourse to the originals. In these engravings moreover lie the strength and originality of Dürer's creative powers, and by them he has exercised so powerful and fascinating an influence on the world of art and letters.

It is a different matter with the paintings and drawings of Dürer. The number of paintings executed by him is very few, and they are scattered all over Europe. The genuine paintings from his brush which until recently existed in England could have been counted on the fingers of a single hand; and it is doubtful if at the present moment more than two genuine paintings by Dürer exist in these islands. In the print-room at the British Museum, and in a few private collections, there are drawings by him sufficient to illustrate all the various stages of his artistic career. Many of these too have, by modern skill and care, been reproduced in fairly good facsimile; but the student as well as the expert cannot but feel the necessity of examining the original drawings themselves, as no mechanical process can ever succeed in reproducing the quality and personality that is inherent in every stroke of the human hand.

It follows therefore that in England at all events the paintings and drawings of Dürer are less known, less appreciated, and certainly less understood than the more familiar engravings. It is the intention of the following pages to try and show the importance of Albrecht Dürer as a painter in the art-history not only of his own country but of the whole world.

German art is but little understood by the British race. Educated and nurtured as the art-student is on the perfected canons of art, as fixed by the works of the great painters of Italy, the productions of artists north of the Alps jar upon the eyes and conflict with the preconceived emotions of those who for the first time direct their minds towards them. The beauty and significance of the paintings by the great Flemish artists, Van Eyck, Van der Weyden, Van der Goes, Gerard David, and others have for some time been established and vindicated in the domain of art. The works of German painters however still remain distasteful to the palate for the majority of students, although relished and valued by a

few. And yet the study of German art has its fascinations, and repays a hundredfold the time which may be devoted to it.

Germany has ever been, and is still, a country of craftsmen rather than artists. The works of German artists smack of the workshop and not of the open air. In a northern climate a man's life is spent as much indoors as under the sky. In the south a house is but a shelter from the heat of the sun, or from the violence of the storm,—a storehouse of a man's family, goods, and chattels. Life is spent mainly in the open air; and the days are but few during which the warmth necessary for human life is not acquired directly from the sun. North of the Alps the house is the centre of life. The enemy to be guarded against is the cold, and the purveyor of warmth and comfort is, for the greater part of the year, the stove.

For the same reason, in the sunny south, through constant exercise in the open air, through the lightness of clothing required to protect the body, and through the moderateness of the diet necessary for the preservation of health, the human form attains its highest perfection and beauty. The basis of Greek art is "the human form divine," and the same may be said of the Italian art of the Renaissance.

North of the Alps mankind has to contend with the inclemency and asperities of nature, entailing a heavier diet, warmer and thicker clothing, and, for the greater part of the year, a more sedentary life. The human form tends to become stronger and hardier, squarer and thicker set, but without the natural liveness and suppleness of the south. Veiled as it is by the increased amount of clothing, it no longer presents itself to the artist's eye as the most suitable object for his study. This deficiency is the great stumbling-block in northern art, and the student must begin by discarding all such ideas, as may



*Decorative Design.
British Museum.*

already have been inculcated in his mind by a study of Greek or Italian art.

During that epoch of time which is known as the Middle Ages, two important events occurred. South of the Alps and the great mountain-chain which links them to the east, the Old World died, wrecked and pillaged by disease and decay and the savage brutality of mankind. Centuries were to elapse before a sufficient clearance could be made for the rehabilitation and reconstitution of Italy and Greece, and the task is incomplete even at the present day.

The Eastern Empire crumbled in the dust, and amid the ruins of antiquity tyranny and barbarism reigned supreme. North of the Alps there were signs of a new birth; the earth was in travail of the Modern World. The Roman Empire had by sheer physical force pushed back the rough untutored hordes of the north to the extreme boundaries of the ancient world, until, exhausted by its own efforts, it withdrew and shrunk within its gates, leaving an open field behind it, over which the pent-up forces of barbarism burst like a mountain torrent, sweeping away walls, posts, and bars, unchecked by mountains or rivers, carrying wreckage and destruction up to the very gates and altars of civilisation, even to Rome, Byzantium, and Alexandria. As the waves retired within their natural limits they carried back with them an infusion of the civilisation which they had destroyed. From this fusion of the ancient culture with the untutored simplicity of the north sprang the Modern World, with Christianity for its nurse.

Art has ever been the faithful handmaid of religion, and as the northern world progressed towards civilisation the two worked together as mistress and servant. The vesture of antiquity, which was first adopted in imitation of the south, was gradually laid aside in favour of one better suited to the habits and customs of the people. The Church, the one great centre of life in the Middle Ages, found the spacious vaults and arcades of the temple or basilica ill-suited to a colder climate. As the minds of men aspired upwards in the hope of penetrating the great mystery of the Christian faith, roof and spire rose higher and higher, as permanent symbols of their thoughts. Faith in things above supplanted the ancient worship of things below, and the classic temple was replaced by the Gothic cathedral.

As the vast tracts of territory north of the Alps became gradually cultivated and inhabited by a people who were beginning to learn that the comforts of blessing and peace were far more to be desired than the spoils and gains of war and conquest, a steady flow of commerce began from the southern seas to the northern and back again. The two main arteries of commerce were the great rivers of the Rhine and the Elbe, by which the products of eastern and southern countries were transported from Venice or Genoa in the south to Bruges and Antwerp or to the great Hanse towns in the north. Along the banks of these rivers or their connecting land-ways there grew up settlements of commercial people, towns no longer centred round the castle or stronghold of the local tyrant, but aggregates of steadfast peace-loving burghers, intent on their purses and ledgers rather than on their swords and corslets. Midway in the road of commerce from south to north arose the well-known city of Nuremberg, famous in the annals of trade, whose citizens were ever to be found chaffering on the steps of the Rialto or the quays of Antwerp or Lübeck.

Among people whose progress and development is as that of infancy towards mature age, the Fine Arts make but little progress. The only art which really flourished in the Middle Ages is that which is inherent in the human race for all time,—the art of the carpenter or carver. Wood and stone were the commonest and most easily procured materials. In his smoke-stained cottage, the highlander of Bavaria or Switzerland wrought bole and branch into objects of religious or domestic utility; and, as the great cathedrals raised their heads above the adjoining towers and roofs, their pillars, vaults and spires were carved and wrought with the incidental tracery and ornament which are associated with the name of Gothic, saintly figures and symbols being frequently mixed up with the uncouth and grotesque creations of a pent-up imagination. The art of the painter was but little required. The home had no place for it, and the church, at first, but little need for it. When the painter's art was employed it was merely as an assistant to architecture in the decoration and enlivening of the building; to the glass-blower in filling up the great spaces occupied by the windows among the soaring pointed arches; to the carver and sculptor in ornamenting the shrines or figures which he wrought in wood or stone; or to the scribe in adding to the

beauty and value of a manuscript. Among the numerous guilds on which the commercial prosperity of mediæval towns depended, there was no place for painters as a separate trade, they being classed with glass-blowers, goldsmiths, and sometimes even with barbers.

It was not until the middle of the fourteenth century that the painters began to take a prominent position of their own. This was mainly due to a change of fashion, whereby the devout found that a shrine upon an altar could be wrought more rapidly, with a more pleasing effect, and probably at a much less cost, by painting than by the usual process of carving in wood and stone. The early painters of such pictures had but little idea of true pictorial effect. Their groups and figures represent what they had previously seen in wood and stone; the conventionalities and deficiencies of grouping in different planes being reproduced on the panel just as they appear among the reliefs or niches of the carvings. The rigorous mysticism of the mediæval Church kept the artist's eyes and hands in bondage. To him Nature was as yet a sealed book, the beauty and pathos of simple humanity unknown. The sublimity of mediæval religion in Germany was the savage sublimity of a mountain-range, clouded and rugged in its summits, dark and cruel in its approaches, the journey across which to a better land was environed by a host of dangerous and treacherous enemies. Of the serene majesty of religion, the legacy of paganism, there is no trace in early northern art. The ancient religion, from which Christianity weaned the northern tribes, was the savage and cruel superstition of Asgard, the religion of strength and violence, of giants and dragons, in which the untamed cruelty of a wild beast was blended with the imagination and ignorance of a child. Grafted on to such a stock the Christianity of mediæval Germany inherited much that was terrible and grotesque.

When however a real demand for painted shrines and panels was felt, the painters began to take a place in public life, and schools or rather workshops for painting sprang up in all the principal towns,—Prague, Augsburg, Nuremberg, Basle, Cologne, everywhere where wealth was aggregated together; for, as in war, money is the sinews of art.

A city of burghers, intent on commerce, like Nuremberg, is never a good field for the growth and ripening of art. Though their progress

may be slow and steady, following the march of the human race, the Fine Arts love better the untied purse-strings of a prince or noble, than



Boy Angel with Emblems of the Passion. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

all the tight and bulging wallets of the merchant. A Maximilian does more for Art than all the Fuggers and Imhoffs put together, even though it may actually be the gold of the merchant which passes through

the bounteous hand of the emperor into the pocket of the artist. So in Nuremberg the progress of the Fine Arts was but slow, ministering but to the demands and necessities of daily life, as occasion called for them.

The records of the town contain from 1300 A.D. onwards the names of sculptors, goldsmiths, wood-engravers, and painters, much the same as are to be found in the ancient records of any city of importance. One point of interest among the names of painters is, that the artist is sometimes described as "Stone-cutter and Painter," showing that the two arts were practised together by the same craftsman and in the same workshop. In 1363 there is mention of one "Berthold, Meister, Bildschnitzer und Maler," and in 1393 one "Hans Backandey, Bildschnitzer und Maler." It was not however until the beginning of the next century that any paintings were produced of sufficient importance and merit to take a place in the art-history of the world.

Apart from its functions of decoration and ornament, painting had at this time in Nuremberg found two spheres of operation. These were the altar-piece and the epitaph. The votive-picture, enshrined above the altar, is a familiar factor in the art of every country. The epitaph, or votive-picture attached to a monument, is peculiarly characteristic of northern art, and is nowhere so well illustrated, even at the present day, as in the great churches of St. Lawrence and St. Sebald at Nuremberg, where many of these epitaphs remain in their original situation. The great burgher-families of Nuremberg, the Imhoffs, Holzschuhers, Ebners, Tuchers, and others, on the decease of any particular member of their family, frequently caused a votive-picture to be made, which was suspended in the church to which they belonged. Sometimes it was a mere coat-of-arms, similar to the hatchments that were lately in vogue in England; and in the two great churches at Nuremberg the visitor at this day can trace back the members of these burgher-families in this way through the heraldic emblems which cluster on the walls and pillars of the church. When in pious memory of the deceased a votive-picture was commissioned, it was usually a sacred subject with portraits of the deceased and the other members of the family below. Some of the earliest Nuremberg epitaphs are attributed to the hand of one Berthold, and they belong to the first quarter of the fifteenth century. Whether identical or not with the Berthold of

1363 mentioned above, he may almost certainly be identified with the painter Berthold, who in 1423 was commissioned by the Town Council to paint the interior of the Rathhaus. It is with this Berthold that the history of painting in Nuremberg may be said to begin. One of the paintings attributed to Meister Berthold, a Madonna of the Imhoff family, in the Church of St. Lawrence at Nuremberg, has a curious affinity to the paintings of Gentile da Fabriano which exercised so much influence on painting at Venice. It is not impossible, in fact very probable, that the impulse given to painting in Germany in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was, even at that date, due to the constant traffic and commerce with the towns and republics of Italy.

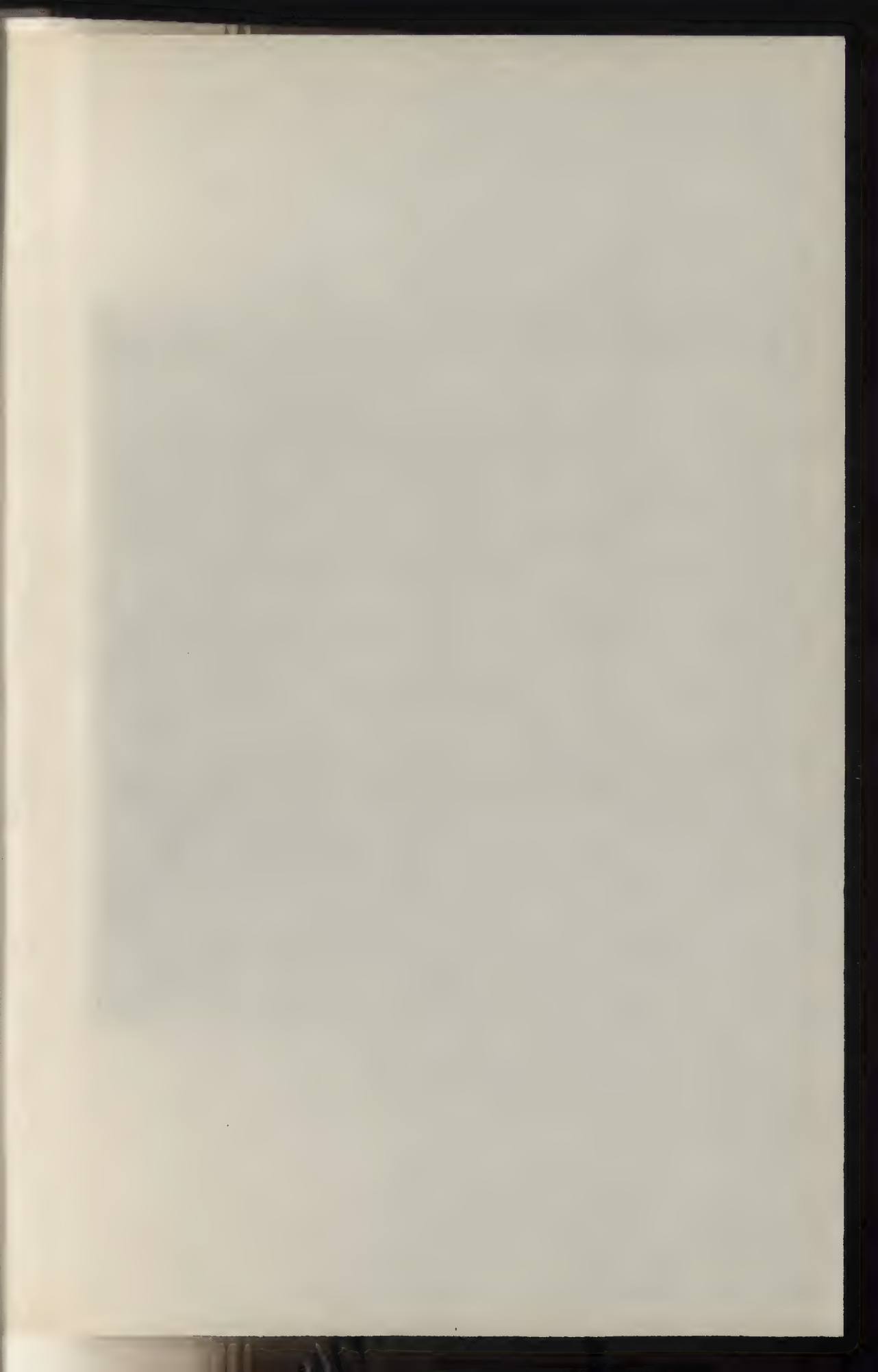
Not many years after the painting of the Rathhaus, the name occurs for the first time in 1451 among the citizens, who are described as painters, of Hans Pleydenwurff, followed in 1461 by that of Valentin Wolgemut. With these names the history of painting in Nuremberg may be said to start on certain ground, as a number of paintings are in existence at Nuremberg and elsewhere which can safely be attributed to the hands of one member or another of these families, or to the joint efforts of their firm. Hans Pleydenwurff had some reputation as a painter, enough to obtain a commission from a town as far off as Breslau. He died in 1472, leaving a widow, Barbara, and a son, Wilhelm. Valentin Wolgemut, of whose efforts as a painter less is known, and who lived in the same quarter of the city (St. Sebald's) as Pleydenwurff, died about 1469, leaving a widow, Anna, and a son, Michel, then aged 35. This son, Michel Wolgemut, married Hans Pleydenwurff's widow in 1473, and was in all probability an assistant or partner to her former husband, a position which her son Wilhelm held towards him. From the studio or workshop of the firm of Pleydenwurff and Wolgemut appear to have issued all the principal works in painting executed in Nuremberg at that date, and their pupils and assistants were probably very numerous. The only other painters of importance in Nuremberg at that time were the Trautts from Speyer, and it may be doubted whether they worked in rivalry to, rather than in conjunction with, the firm of Pleydenwurff and Wolgemut.

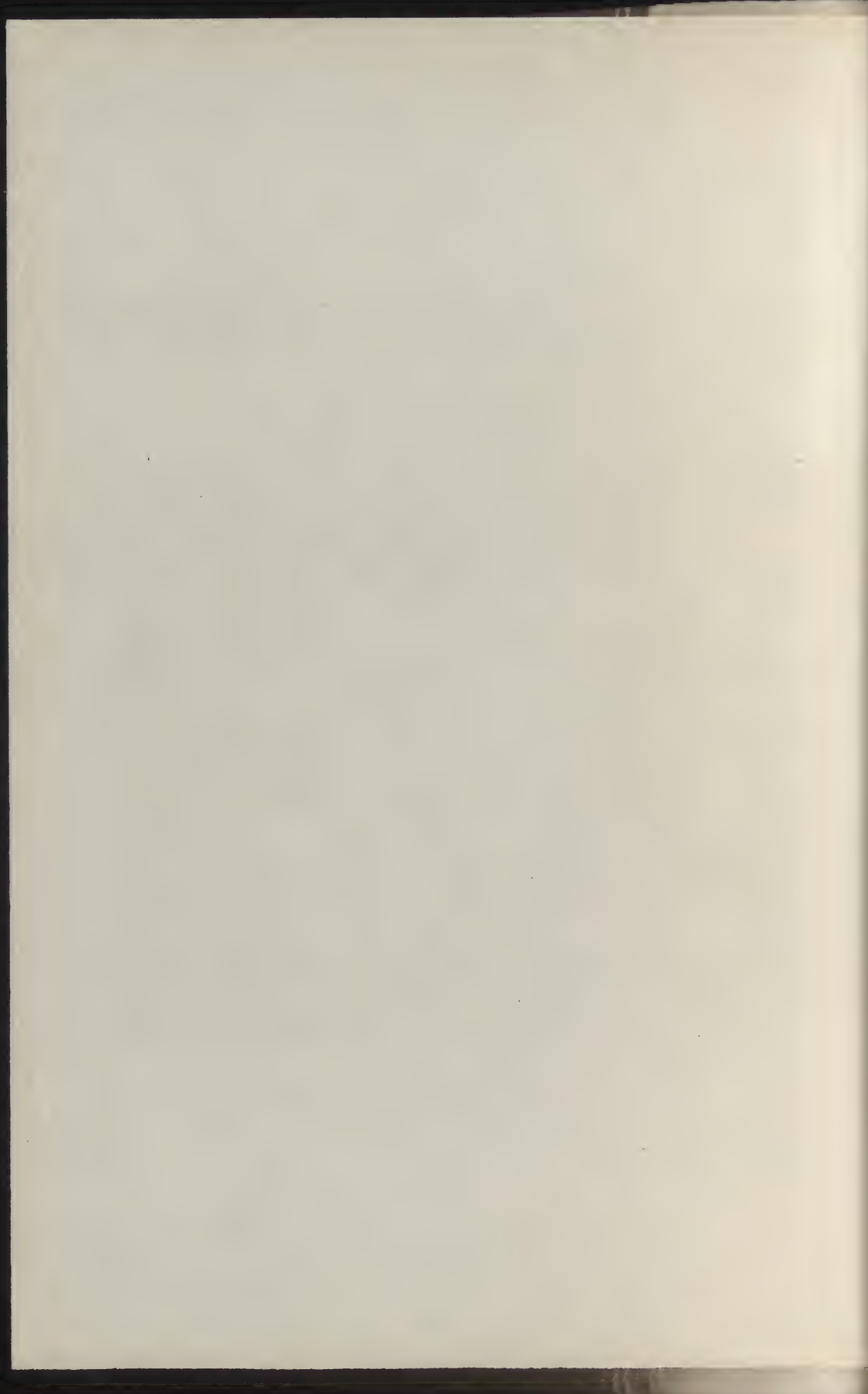
A number of paintings exist, some possessing considerable merit, which have hitherto passed generally under the name of Michel

Wolgemut. An attempt has been made to distinguish among these paintings the works of three or four or more different hands.¹ It is safer however to regard them all as the production of the same workshop, in which masters and assistants doubtless contributed each their respective share in the several works in hand. Many of these paintings remain in Nuremberg, some being known by the names of the families by whom they were commissioned as epitaphs or votive-offerings, such as the altar-piece in the Church of St. Jakob, the *Mass of St. Gregory*, the *St. Catherine*, the *Martyrdom of St. Catherine*, and other paintings in St. Lawrence, the Löffelholtz altar in St. Sebald, and numerous paintings in the German Museum. Others are to be found at Munich, Augsburg, Breslau, Heilsbronn, and elsewhere. A number of portraits also exist which are attributed to the same artists as these paintings.

Many of these pictures exist in the form of wings which have formed part of an altar-piece, folding in divisions, the main central part of which was in most cases carved in stone or wood, as is the case with the great altar-piece attributed to Wolgemut at Heilsbronn. The crowded grouping and the apparently grotesque treatment of the limbs and bodies are due to the combination of painting and sculpture in the same work. As the influence of the great Flemish painters began to work its way up the Rhine and pervade the rising schools of Swabia and Franconia, a distinct improvement is visible in drawing and composition; and by the end of the fifteenth century works were being turned out by the Pleydenwurff and Wolgemut firm which, with their rich brocades, elegant landscape backgrounds, and greater serenity of expression, were not wholly unworthy of being classed with the paintings of Ghent and Bruges, and certainly on a level with the intermediate school at Cologne. This may be traced to the powerful influence of Martin Schongauer, the famous painter-engraver of Colmar, who received and imbibed into his art the grace and spirit of Rogier van der Weyden and the Flemish painters, and at the same time maintained that genuine national style which is generally recognised as German.

¹ For further information see a valuable work, *Die Malerschule von Nürnberg im xiv. und xv. Jahrhundert in ihrer Entwicklung bis auf Dürer*, by Henry Thode (Frankfurt am Main. H. Keller, 1891).



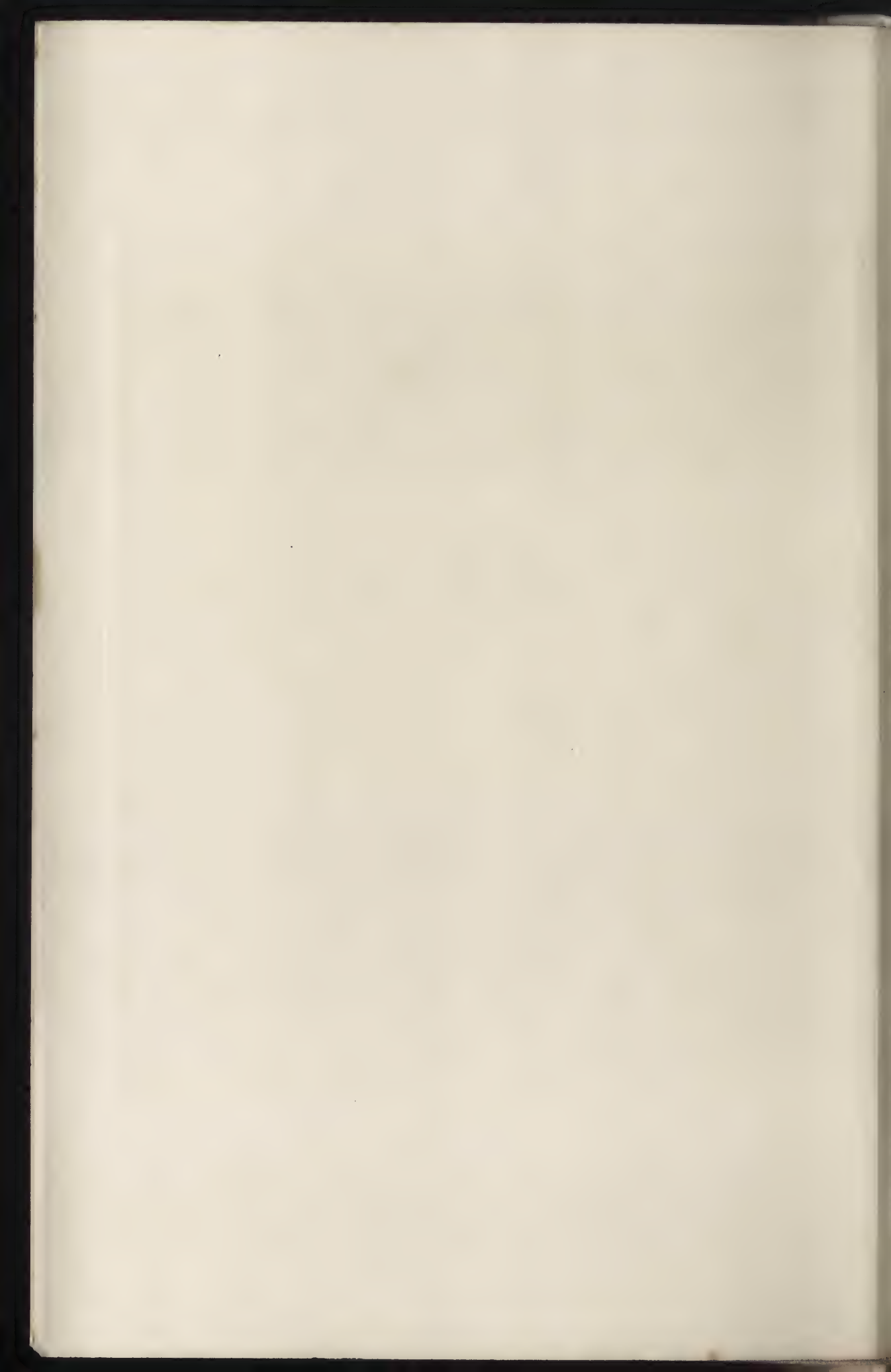




Albrecht Dürer, Portret

Wolgemut, Portret

Michel Wolgemut.



In 1455, when the elder Albrecht Dürer came into Nuremberg on St. Eulogius's Day, and found Philipp Pirkheimer's wedding festivities being celebrated on the castle green, the painting studio of Hans Pleydenwurff had not yet been established in its well-known quarters on St. Sebald's side, for the painter was then living in the quarter of St. Lawrence. By the time, however, of the birth of the younger Albrecht in 1471, it had been established in the street immediately under the *Veste*, in the neighbourhood of Schedel and Schreyer the historians, Koberger the great master-printer, Walther the astronomer, and other distinguished citizens of Nuremberg. When, therefore, Dürer's father made up his mind that it was useless to waste further time in trying to force his son into the goldsmith's trade, and decided to humour the boy's strongly-expressed inclination towards painting, he would naturally turn to his friends and neighbours, Michel Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, and ask them to take the boy as a pupil and assistant in their firm. "He gave in to me," writes his son, "and in the year 1486, on St. Andrew's Day, he apprenticed me to Michel Wolgemut to serve him for three years." How much personal instruction the young Dürer received from Wolgemut must remain uncertain. He was probably one of numerous pupils. It appears from his own statement that "God lent me industry, so that I learnt well; but I had to put up with a great deal of annoyance from his assistants."¹ The inscription on the early drawing in the British Museum of a lady with a hawk, stating that Dürer did it "before he came to the painter, in Wolgemut's house on the upper story in the hinderhouse, in the presence of Conrad Lomayr, deceased," would seem to show that his instructor was not Wolgemut himself, but one of the other painters employed in the firm. At all events it would appear that the young Dürer's chief occupation was drawing, and that the lesson-books from which he learnt were the engravings of Schongauer. The early drawings of his which have survived are all pen-drawings, done in the dry manner of an engraver, with nothing to indicate the hand of a painter in them. In the wings of the beautiful Peringsdörffer altar-piece at Nuremberg, which

¹ "Doch liess er mirs nach, und da man zählt nach Christi Geburt 1486 an St. Endrestag, versproch mich mein Vater in die Lehrfahr zu Michael Wohlgemuth, drei Jahr lang ihm zu dienen. In der Zeit verliche mir Gott Fleiss, dass ich wol lernete. Aber ich viel von seinen Knechten mich leiden musste."

was completed in Wolgemut's studio in 1487, no trace can be discovered of Dürer's hand, nor is it probable that a pupil of one year's standing would have been given a share in the completion of so important a work. On the other hand it is difficult to believe that a lad with such precocious skill as a draughtsman as Dürer should not have been employed at all on the illustrations for the two mighty volumes which were illustrated by Wolgemut and Pleydenwurff, and published by Koberger, the *Schatzbehalter* in 1491, and the *Weltchronik*, completed in 1493. They were the venture of the printer, Koberger, Dürer's own godfather and friend, and from the great number of illustrations they must have taken some time to prepare. If Wolgemut had in his employment draughtsmen of superior excellence to the young Dürer, his staff must have been a very remarkable one. Allowing for the execution of the principal drawings by the hands of Wolgemut or Pleydenwurff themselves, there remain numbers of minor illustrations which could be entrusted to their youthful assistants. Although Dürer left the studio more than a year before the completion of the *Schatzbehalter*, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he spent some of his time upon the illustrations to these works. The share of Wolgemut and Pleydenwurff in the work, as recorded in the colophon to the *Weltchronik*, appears to indicate that a part, at all events, of the illustrations was merely supervised by them.¹ On the termination of Dürer's apprenticeship to Wolgemut in 1489, his father sent him abroad for four years' *Wanderjahre*. Meanwhile the firm of Wolgemut and Pleydenwurff continued until the death of the latter in 1494, when it was carried on by Wolgemut alone. He is heard of again in Dürer's life in 1506, when Dürer writes from Venice to Pirkheimer about his young brother Hans, asking him "to speak to my mother that she may have a talk with Wolgemut, as to whether he can give him work until I come back, and then I will honourably repay him." Wolgemut, however, lives immortal in the portrait of him drawn and painted by his former pupil in 1516, in his eighty-second year, three years before his death. "This has Albrecht Dürer drawn in counterfeit, after his master Michel

¹ "Adhibitis tamen viris mathematicis pingendique arte peritissimis, Michaelae Wolgemut et Wilhelmo Pleydenwurff, quorum solerti accuratissimaque animadversione tum civitatum tum illustrium virorum figure inserte sunt."



Portrait, said to be Albrecht Dürer's Father. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

Wolgemut, in the year 1516, and he was eighty-two years old," runs the inscription on the portrait, which is continued later, "and he lived until one reckons 1519 years, when he departed this life on St. Andrew's Day early before sunrise." For thirty years the rush-candle burnt in the master's studio, while the pupil went forth into the world to be a torch and beacon to the world. Between the practised skill of a working craftsman such as Wolgemut, and the nascent imaginative art of a youth like Albrecht Dürer, there is a gulf fixed which only the distant eye of posterity can see across. There have been and will be many Wolgemuts in the world, good excellent men, talented and industrious, useful and honoured in their own homes. An artist, however, like Dürer leaves his home a raw youth, stares out upon the unknown world with inquiring eyes, and eventually bestrides that world like a Colossus.

Symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffused unseen throughout eternal space ;
Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child !

KEATS.

CHAPTER II

Dürer's first visit to Venice—Painting at Venice—Return to Nuremberg—Dürer's remarks on painting—Early drawings and paintings—The Baumgärtner "Nativity"—The Jabach altar-piece—The "Adoration of the Kings"—Second visit to Venice.

IN the previous monograph an account was given of Dürer's *Wanderjahre*; how he travelled through Germany to Colmar to seek instruction in the school of Schongauer, who died before Dürer reached him; how Dürer probably travelled along the usual trade route by Strasburg and Basle according to the direction of his godfather, Koberger; and how almost certainly he made his way under the same auspices to Venice. Before leaving home in 1490 he left a specimen of the skill which he had acquired as a painter, in the portrait of his father, which is now in the Uffizii at Florence. Apart from this there is little to show what progress he had made as a painter in Wolgemut's studio. Certainly his father seems to have perceived that his son was destined to attain his chief celebrity in the art of engraving, or he could not have selected the Schongauer school of goldsmith-engravers for the further development of his son's talents. Although the portrait of his father, painted in 1490, shows much of the strenuous side of his art, which was so characteristic of Dürer's work in his later days, Dürer was but inadequately equipped with a rudimentary knowledge of painting, when he first set foot on the already tale-worn quays of Venice.

The early history of painting in Venice has been hitherto but imperfectly understood. A regular sequence and connection had been presupposed between the school of Murano (the Vivarini) and the school of Padua (the Bellini). The recent investigations of Mr. Bernhard Berenson tend to show that a great misconception has existed upon this

point.¹ It would appear certain that the Vivarini school, the elder in



A Concert. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

date, maintained a separate and competing existence against its younger

¹ *Lorenzo Lotto: an Essay in Constructive Criticism*, by Bernhard Berenson (Putnam's, 1895).

rivals, the Bellini, and that many of the painters who have been grouped together as pupils of the latter really belonged to the former. Painting had been introduced into Venice in the first quarter of the fifteenth century. By 1440 a flourishing workshop existed in the island of Murano, which was very similar in some of its arrangements and productions to that described above at Nuremberg. The works produced by this firm of artists were altar-pieces in compartments, the paintings usually enshrined in richly-decorated Gothic frames, the chief subjects themselves being sometimes executed in wood or stone, as well as in painting. This combination of carving and painting is in strong relation to the works of German artists at this period ; and it is a curious fact that the principal partner in the firm appears to have been a German, Johannes Alamanus as he signs himself (possibly the Bildschnitzer to the firm), the other partner, Antonio da Murano, being the first member of the Vivarini family of painters. It may have been that the northern influence was at first as strong in Venetian art as that of the south ; but that, while the form and construction of the altar-piece was derived from the carved shrines of Germany, the painter's art added the grace and beauty of the south, which qualities gradually supplanted the more material decorative elements, and eventually obtained a complete and lasting supremacy.

Very soon, however, a rival school began to raise its head in Venice, that of the Bellini. Jacopo Bellini, the father, a pupil of Gentile da Fabriano, and his two sons, Gentile and Giovanni, came under the influence of the school of Squarcione at Padua, and their connection by marriage with the greatest of North Italian painters at that date, Andrea Mantegna, brought a new and powerful element into Venetian art, as represented by them. The further development of the technical side of painting, which appears to have been introduced into Venice by Antonello da Messina, was quickly adopted by the Bellini, who by their admirable paintings overshadowed the elder school of the Vivarini, and paved the way for the future glories of the Venetian school.

When the young Dürer first came to Venice at the end of the fifteenth century, he would thus have found two rival schools of painting in existence, that of the Vivarini, then represented by Alvise Vivarini, around or under whom, according to Mr. Berenson, were working such well-known painters as Jacopo de' Barbari, Francesco Bonsignori,

Bartolommeo Montagna, Cima da Conegliano, and Lorenzo Lotto, and



Albrecht Dürer, by himself. Uffizii Gallery, Florence.

From a Photograph by D. Anderson.

that of the Bellini with their pupils, such as Carpaccio, Mansueti, Previtali, Sebastiano Luciani, and others. The golden age of Giorgione,

Titian, and Palma was but just dawning, and the rays of their sun had not yet illuminated the earth. In view of the partially German origin of the Muranese school it is more than probable that Dürer was first brought into contact with them, since the Nuremberg merchant, Anton Kolb, to whom no doubt Dürer had been recommended by his godfather, Koberger, with whom Kolb was in correspondence, not only was on terms of friendship with Jacopo de' Barbari, one of the leading painters of the Vivarini school, but openly declared him to be the best painter then in the world. Allusion has been made in the previous monograph to the influence exercised upon Dürer by Barbari. It is noteworthy also that there are certain points in the paintings of Dürer which find their affinity, not only in the works of Barbari, but also in those of Lotto and other members of the Vivarini school. Among these are the minute and delicate treatment of the silken hair, and the intensity and earnestness, amounting almost to painfulness, in the delineation of the human character. The influence was probably exercised by Dürer, for Lotto himself was too young to have been associated with Dürer at this date. Anyhow, assuming the influence of Barbari and Dürer to have been reciprocal, it is not unreasonable to suppose that some memory lingered in the Venetian schools of the young German artist with the serious inquiring face, the ever-curious mind, and that unrivalled precision and rapidity of draughtsmanship by a hand better trained in goldsmithry and engraving than in painting. In the actual practice of painting Dürer does not appear during this first visit to Venice to have come at once into contact with, or to have been attracted by, the new technical processes introduced from Flanders by Antonello da Messina. Although thrown into greater intercourse with the Vivarini school, he quickly became alive to the majestic power, both in conception and execution, of the great painter in the neighbouring city of Padua, Andrea Mantegna. It is evident from his remarks on his later visit that his inclination had begun to turn to the works of Mantegna and Bellini. His first visit to Venice was probably a short one. It would naturally be the furthest point of his travels, and he may not have had time to do more than look round, before he received the summons from his father to return home to Nuremberg, in view of the marriage which he had arranged for him with the daughter of Hans Frey. But this visit to Venice was very far from

being unfruitful, for it was now that he was introduced by Jacopo de' Barbari to the study of Human Proportions, which occupied so much of his thoughts during the remainder of his life. Now also had his mind been opened to the wonderful perspective and the powerful *tempera* painting of Mantegna in addition to that artist's tremendous engravings, of which Dürer took specimens home. Now also he was at all events introduced to



View of Trent. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

the new process of glazing in oils, the principle of which he may have learnt from Antonello da Messina himself. Moreover, Dürer had learnt to exercise his pen and paint-brush in the practice of rapid sketching, the first artist who may be said to have done so; and, wherever he went, he carried his sketch-book, palette, and brushes in his wallet, and noted down all the objects of interest in nature or in the life of men, which he came across on his long and tedious journeys across the Alps. It is on these journeys, in all probability, that he made these sketches of wall-girt towns

such as Innsbrück, Trent, and Maestricht, marble quarries, studies of trees, etc., so many of which are washed in in water-colours, some on vellum, and then highly finished with a kind of vivid-coloured *gouache*. One of his most important works in this last manner was the portrait of himself in gaily-coloured dress, holding the sprig of *Mannstreu* or eryngo, inscribed with the reverent inscription, "Man fach die Gat, als es oben schat," which he probably executed as a gift for his betrothed. His training as a goldsmith had taught him precision of stroke and accuracy of eye; and the minuteness of his sketches in colour could have rivalled that of the finest Dutch painter in the seventeenth century. Landscape was one of his favourite studies, and Dürer may be said to have been the first painter to paint it for its own sake as a natural object, although the time had not yet arrived when it would be the subject of a picture in itself.

At all events Dürer returned to Nuremberg a painter at heart, a rival to his old master, Wolgemut, with a knowledge and experience which the elder man had never had an opportunity of acquiring. In after-life Dürer began to prepare a Treatise on Painting, or *Banquet for Young Painters*, of which only fragments remain. From these can be gathered certain *obiter dicta* which throw light on Dürer's views of the proper sphere of painting as an art.

Dürer's friend, Joachim Camerarius, in his eulogy of his lost friend, says of Dürer, that "Nature had specially designed him for a painter, and therefore he embraced the study of that art with all his energies, and was ever desirous of observing the works and principles of the famous painters of every land, and of imitating whatever he approved in them." These words would seem to denote a tendency to that eclecticism which was afterwards carried to such undue excess by the painters of the Bolognese school. Dürer was no servile copyist. He found in the works of Barbari, Bellini, and Mantegna things which were new to him, and he studied these to improve his own artistic and intellectual development. So in his studies from nature he copied what was strange and wonderful,—the curves of a plant and the bursting of its blossom, the shimmer of still water in a pool, or the flashing of a bird's breast or wing, the crouching terror of a frightened hare, or the delicate texture of a butterfly's wing, and thus laid up in his mind treasures for the *Traumwerk* with which he adorned and completed his engravings.



Weier Haus. From a Water-colour Drawing in the British Museum.



In the fragments of his treatise on painting occur many passages in which he reveals his ideas of the scope and limitations of painting :—

“To paint is to be able to portray on a flat surface any visible thing whatsoever, that may be chosen.”

“The imagination of a good painter is full of figures ; and were it possible for him to live for ever, he would have from his inward ideas, whereof Plato speaks, always something new to pour forth by the work of his hand.”

“This art of painting is made for the eyes, for the sight is the noblest sense of man.”

“A thing thou beholdest is easier of belief than that thou hearest ; but whatever is both heard and seen we grasp more firmly and more intelligently.”

“One’s opinion of beauty is more credible in a skilful painter’s utterance than in another’s.”

“Utility is part of Beauty ; and what is not useful in a man is not beautiful.”

“The art of painting is employed in the service of the Church, and by it the sufferings of Christ and many other profitable examples are set forth. It preserveth also the likeness of men after their death.”

“The art of true, artistic, and lovely execution in painting is hard to come unto ; it needeth long time and a hand practised to perfect freedom.”

“Would to God it were possible for me to see the work and art of the mighty masters to come, who are yet unborn, for I know that I might be improved. Ah ! how often in my sleep do I behold great works of art and beautiful things, the like whereof never appear to me awake, but so soon as I awake the remembrance of them leaveth me.”

Throughout the somewhat disjointed fragments of this treatise material can be gathered enough to discover Dürer’s artistic temperament. Industry, practice, faith, candour, humility, hope are some of the qualities which he postulates in an artist, though indeed they are equally necessary in any other profession of life.

So Dürer in May 1494 returned to Nuremberg, married his young bride, Agnes Frey, and took up his residence with his old father and mother,—the beloved parents, who had the lion’s share of his love,—and began for himself a career as creative artist in the old gabled home under the slope of the *Veste*. With a wife and the possibility of a family, and moreover with the care of his aging parents upon him, Dürer had by no means an easy life before him. His father, as Dürer has himself recorded, spent his life in great industry and hard severe work, his only object

being to earn with his own hand a living for himself and family ; and in his father's footsteps Dürer was, no doubt, determined to tread.

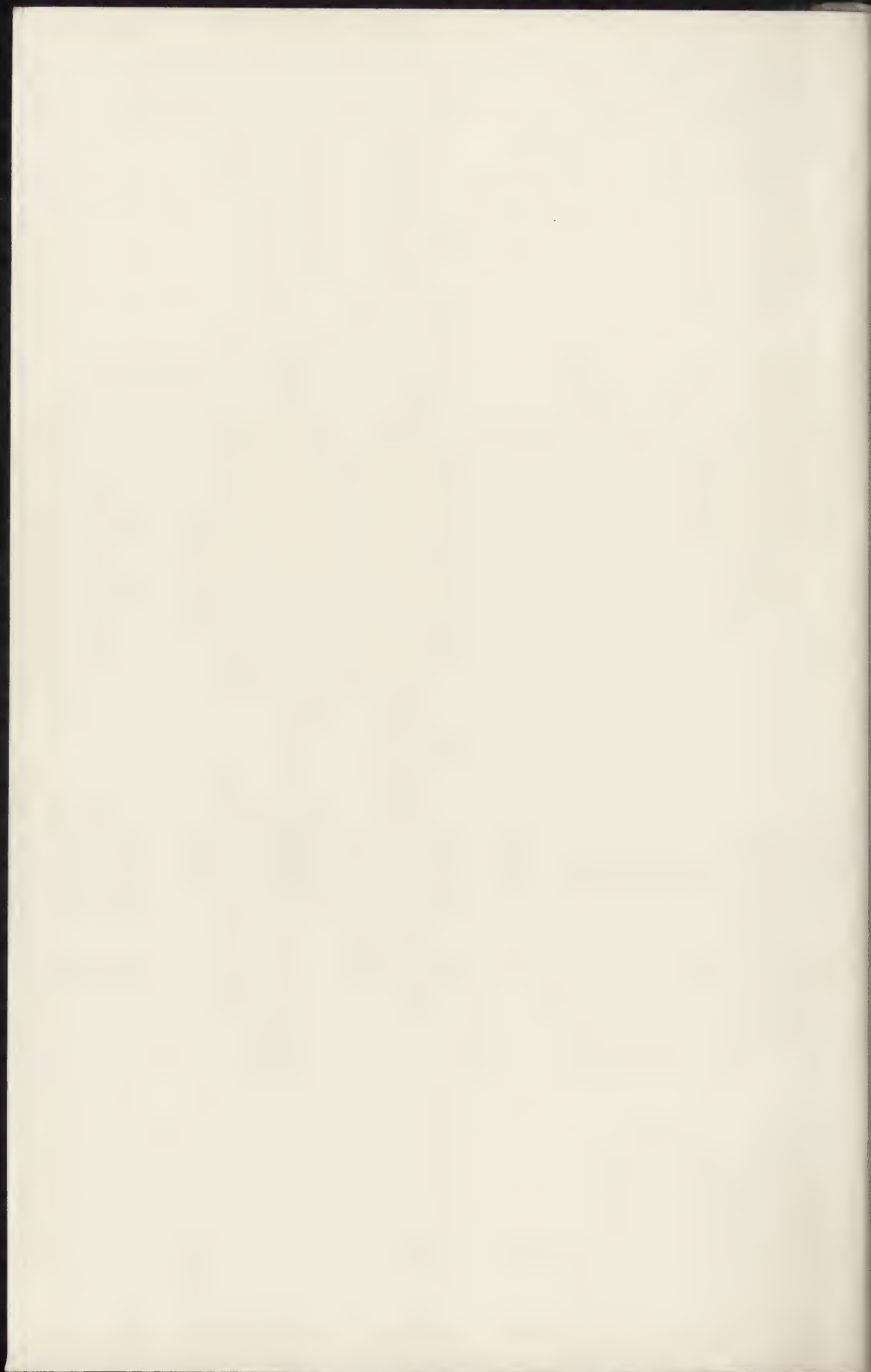
There is nothing phenomenal in Dürer's progress in art. He was no "infant prodigy," no comet to flash across the horizon and disappear in a shower of fading sparks. He was a simple, earnest, industrious artist, always working towards an ideal, which he never considered himself to have attained. It would be improbable that with his youth and inexperience he should be able at first to compete in Nuremberg with such well-known painters as his old master Wolgemut and others in the ordinary practice of their art. Engraving presented a more open field, although it was some time before his hand attained the precision of later years. Meanwhile he spent many hours in drawing from the life and from nature ; recording in his sketch-books carefully-wrought views of the picturesque objects in the neighbourhood, such as the "Weiherhaus" (in the British Museum), the view of "Kalkreuth," and the "Drahtziehmühle" (at Berlin) ; frequenting the public baths that he might study the nude in pursuance of his favourite inquiries about Human Proportion ; copying at home the Italian engravings of Mantegna and others which he had brought back from Italy, in fact laying a thoroughly true groundwork for his future artistic career. As the last work of his before leaving home in 1490 was a portrait of his father, so one of the earliest works after his return was another portrait of the same parent, painted in 1497. This portrait is now at Syon House, Isleworth.¹ Seven years had dealt kindly with the simple old man ; the face is a little thinner, the pose of the body less robust, but it is the same earnest kindly face which bade farewell to his son in 1490. Five years later, in the night next before St. Martin's Eve, the old man passed away, and Dürer was left in charge of his old mother and his young brother Hans, in addition to his duties as a husband.

Meanwhile Dürer found a patron outside his native town in the person of Frederick the Wise, the enlightened Elector of Saxony, afterwards the champion of Luther and the Reformation. Dürer painted a portrait of him in *tempera* (now at Berlin), a striking if somewhat un-

¹ The Syon House portrait was formerly in the collections of the Earl of Arundel and Charles I., and was engraved by Hollar (see the *Portfolio*, January 1896, p. 12). Other versions exist, but the Syon House portrait is more generally accepted as the original.



Madonna and Child, with St. Anthony and St. Sebastian. Dresden Gallery. From a Photograph by F. Hanfstaengl.



pleasant rendering of the Elector in his younger days, before he sank into



Oswald Krel. Munich Gallery. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein, Nuremberg.

the corpulence which was characteristic of his family, as afterwards depicted

in the well-known portrait of the Elector engraved by Dürer in 1524. The Elector was a consistent patron of Dürer throughout his life. For him at this period Dürer painted the great altar-piece at Dresden, the *Virgin adoring the Child*, with St. Anthony and St. Sebastian on the wings. This remarkable work is executed in *tempera* on canvas, in the manner of Mantegna, whose influence is shown not only in the handling and colour, but in the drawing of some of the incidental figures. It appears to have been ordered by the Elector for the Allerheiligenkirche at Wittenberg, where Scheurl saw it in 1506, and from Wittenberg it came to find a permanent home in the Royal Picture Gallery at Dresden. Throughout his career Dürer, with but few exceptions, carried out his dogma of painting, that it should be employed in the service of the Church, and in painting portraits. One of his exceptions was a painting of *Hercules and the Stymphalian Birds*, now in a damaged condition in the German Museum at Nuremberg. This picture, which stands alone among Dürer's works, but is undoubtedly the work of his hand, does not rank among his successful efforts. It is uncertain for what reason it was painted, but it seems to have found its way into the possession of the royal family of Bavaria, who returned it to Nuremberg.

Portraiture occupied a good deal of Dürer's time. In 1498 he painted the well-known portrait of himself in gaily-coloured clothes, one version of which is now at Madrid,¹ having once been in England as part of the collections of the Earl of Arundel and Charles I., the other in the Uffizii at Florence. Dürer's love for fine clothes was very much marked, and perhaps was a source of trouble to his wife Agnes. His long hair, no longer a tumbled mass, as in the bridal portrait of four years back, is now elaborately arranged in a mass of slender, tendril-like, golden curls. The face is long, thin and serious, almost conflicting with the elegance and gaiety of his garb, and has not yet acquired the solemnity which is so distinctive of the famous portrait at Munich. Among his friends and fellow-citizens whom he portrayed was one Oswald Krell, painted in 1499, a stern strenuous face, elaborated almost to the verge of caricature, a face however which arrests the attention and even diverts it from the minute and masterly execution of the accessories. His young

¹ A reproduction of this portrait was given in the *Portfolio* for January 1896, p. 14, and may be compared with the Florence portrait on p. 25 of this number.



Katharina Fürleger. Augsburg Gallery. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.



brother, Hans Dürer, is portrayed with a lean, rather haggard face at Munich, done in 1500. Some portraits of the Tucher family at Weimar



The Nativity. Munich Gallery. From a Photograph by F. Hanfstaengl.

and Cassel may perhaps be Dürer's work. A greater interest, however, attaches itself to the two portraits of a young lady of the Fürleger family, Katharina by name, a charming modest German *Mädchen*. Dürer

painted in 1497 two portraits of this maiden, one with long flowing hair like a Madonna, the other with her hair plaited under a kind of horned head-dress. Both portraits bear the arms of the Fürleger family, but it seems doubtful whether they are intended, as usually accepted, for portraits of the same person. Both portraits were in the collection of the Earl of Arundel, and were engraved by W. Hollar. It is difficult to trace them now. A picture corresponding to the former is in the picture gallery at Augsburg, and another version of the same in the Städel Institute at Frankfurt. The Augsburg portrait is probably the original, the wonderful painting of the hair showing all the skill of Dürer's handiwork. Of the latter, various versions exist, one being in the collection of Sir Francis Cook, at Richmond, but no one of these can be accepted as the original.

As Dürer became better known as an artist he began to get commissions for pictures which were executed in his studio with the help of his assistants in the old Wolgemut manner. Deeply interesting as the paintings are, which were produced by Dürer or under his immediate direction, they cannot compare in interest with the work done by him in engraving on wood and copper. The *Deposition of the Cross* at Munich, the similar subject painted for the Holzschuher family in the German Museum at Nuremberg, the *Nativity* of the Baumgärtner family at Munich, the Jabach altar-piece, even the famous *Adoration of the Magi* in the Tribune at Florence, what are they in comparison to the *Apocalypse*, the *Life of Mary*, or the *Great Passion*, to the *Meerwunder*, the *Weihnacht*, or the *Dream*? In painting Dürer had not yet learnt the advantage of completing a picture with his own hand alone, and the pictures of this early date are therefore unequal in composition and execution, the originality of Dürer's design being linked with the conventionalities of an older school. The *Descent from the Cross* at Munich, which bears the signature and the date of 1500, is perhaps the same as that which Dürer is said to have painted for Hans Glim, the goldsmith, who had it hung in the Predigerkirche at Nuremberg, though it afterwards came into the possession of the Imhoff family. A similar picture was commanded by the great family of Holzschuher, and was painted to hang in the Church of St. Sebald at Nuremberg. It appears to have been appropriated by the family of Peller, who substituted their coats-of-arms in place of those belonging to the Holzschuhers. From them it passed away from Nuremberg, finding



Horseman in Armour. From a Drawing in the British Museum.





Trumpeter and Drummer. Cologne Museum. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.



its way, with the Boisserée collection, to Munich. Ludwig I. of Bavaria however restored it to Nuremberg, where it is now placed in the German Museum.

More distinctly the creation of Dürer himself is the altar-piece of the Baumgärtner (or Paumgärtner) family at Munich, painted for the Church of St. Catherine at Nuremberg. The central subject represents the Nativity, and is obviously closely related in conception and design to the exquisite little copperplate engraving known as the *Weihnacht*. The same sunny atmosphere of peace, happiness, and content pervades both compositions; and on the wings are two figures of men in armour, two stalwart knights with their steeds, Stephan and Lucas Baumgärtner, personal friends of the painter. In these two figures Dürer has summed up the chivalry of the Middle Ages. Two earnest steadfast men are shown, equipped for warfare, not wild lansquenets and swashbucklers, who were too common at that date, but soldiers of Christ, ready for their duty, to fight the enemy, both ghostly and bodily, to defend their religion, and relieve the oppressed. In later years Dürer repeated this motive in his world-famous engraving of *The Knight, Death, and the Devil*; but he had already struck the note in the portraits of these two brothers. It is difficult to trace in this noble work any hand but that of Dürer himself.

Some uncertainty attends the authorship of an altar-piece, executed for a merchant named Jabach, at Cologne. The central subject, which may possibly have been executed in wood or stone, has disappeared; but of the wings, the panels of which have been split, the inner halves, with the figures of St. Simeon and St. Lazarus on the one wing and those of St. Joachim and St. Joseph on the other, passed into the Boisserée collection, and thence to Munich. The outer subjects have been separated; one, *Job mocked by his Wife*, a somewhat humorous bit of realism, is in the Städel Institute at Frankfurt; the other half, on which are depicted figures of a fifer and a drummer, perhaps intended to represent two of Job's friends, form part of the Wallraff-Richartz collection in the museum at Cologne. It is as difficult to believe these figures to be all Dürer's handiwork, as it is to deny his share in their production. The drummer in the Cologne fragment would seem to be a portrait of Dürer himself. Probably the idea of the picture was Dürer's, and the work carried on piecemeal in the workshop, where it is probable that he was assisted by

his contemporaries, Hans Baldung, Hans Leonhard Schäuflin, Hans Süss of Kulmbach, and perhaps others, who formed the Dürer staff, as opposed to that of Wolgemut. The altar-piece—*The Crucifixion*—at Ober St. Veit, near Vienna, which was a commission from the Elector of Saxony, was probably executed in this way, and perhaps also the Tucher altar-piece in the Church of St. Sebald at Nuremberg, although the latter work is of a later date. Drawings by Dürer exist for both these compositions, and sketches for similar works exist, a *Nativity* in the Albertina collection at Vienna, a *Last Judgment* in the British Museum, and others, which may or may not have been carried out under Dürer's direction. By 1503 however Dürer had begun to feel his own way as a painter. In that year he painted the first of his single figures of the *Virgin with the Child*, a small painting at present in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna.

A great advance was made in 1504, when Dürer received a further commission from the generous Elector to paint the *Adoration of the Kings*. This picture was presented by the Elector Christian II. of Saxony to the Emperor Rudolph II., and in more recent times was exchanged for a picture by Fra Bartolommeo from the grand-ducal collection at Florence. It now hangs in the Tribune of the Uffizii at Florence, where it holds its own in the admiration of spectators among the priceless works of Raphael, Michelangelo, Mantegna, Titian, and others which surround it. The composition recalls that of the Baumgärtner *Nativity* at Munich. The Virgin sits clad in blue with a white veil, as in the *Nativity*, and holds the Holy Child towards the kneeling king. Behind stands in gorgeous raiment another of the three kings, in whom it is easy to recognise the features of Dürer himself. It can hardly be doubted that this painting is entirely the work of his own hand. Its careful and delicate finish is in complete accordance with the method of painting which he describes in his letters to Jakob Heller a few years later. The incidental accessories are all after Dürer's heart. The tall plant and the two butterflies on the left are evidently direct studies of nature, and so is the stag-beetle on the right. One of Dürer's most exquisitely finished drawings is that of a stag-beetle, at present in the collection of Mr. J. P. Heseltine. It was from such studies of nature that Dürer drew his *Traumwerk*, with which he filled up



The Adoration of the Kings. Uffizii Gallery, Florence. From a Photograph by D. Anderson.



the vacant spaces of his compositions, sometimes crowding them in an apparently unnecessary manner.

Dürer's life was at this point however disturbed by the important event of his second journey to Venice. It is evident that it was by the sale of engravings rather than by his works in painting that Dürer maintained his household. His engravings and woodcuts, being portable,



Death on Horseback. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

inexpensive, and capable of frequent repetition, were sold at the fairs in the neighbourhood, and became an article of commerce on the great trade route to Italy and to the north. Their merit was quickly appreciated in Italy, especially in Venice, where the memory of the young German artist would still be green, and his progress in art a subject of pride and congratulation to the German colony. The Italian engravers did not disdain to borrow passages straight out of Dürer's engravings, and the most expert of them, Marcantonio Raimondi, all went even

further and copied Dürer's woodcuts on to copper, even to the monogram. Whether this was done with a fraudulent intention or not may be left an open question, but there is little reason to doubt Vasari's statement that these copies did get into circulation as originals, and that Dürer's second visit to Venice was due to his anxiety to secure his rights and save himself from pecuniary loss. And so some time in 1505 Dürer found himself again landing on the steps of the Fondaco de' Tedeschi hard by the Rialto bridge at Venice, having left his wife and mother under the charge of his friend Pirkheimer, who had not only advanced Dürer money for his journey, but had undertaken to manage the affairs of his family during his absence. Another cause may have actuated him in leaving Nuremberg, namely, the outbreak of a pestilence, which stalked like Death through the town,—a skeleton riding on a weary hack, as Dürer has represented him in a powerful black chalk drawing, formerly in the Malcolm collection, and now in the British Museum.

CHAPTER III

Progress of painting at Venice—Dürer and the Venetians—The “Feast of the Rose Garlands”—“Christ among the Doctors”—The Dresden “Crucifixion”—The “Madonna with the Finch”—Dürer and Mantegna—The “Adam and Eve”—The “Martyrs of Nicomedia”—The Heller “Assumption”—The “Adoration of the Trinity.”

THERE was still another possible reason for Dürer's journey to Venice at this date. On January 28, 1505, the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, hard by the Rialto and opposite to the small arcaded piazza, which was the resort of merchant life in Venice, was burnt to the ground, some lives and many valuable documents with other treasures being destroyed. The German trade was for the moment paralysed, and temporary accommodation was provided for them in the neighbourhood. Dürer may have suffered loss of valuable stock, as well as of the contracts with the middlemen employed to dispose of his engravings, and he may have found it necessary to come in person to make inquiries. This is however mere conjecture, and the very existence of Marcantonio's copies goes some way to corroborate the reason given by Vasari. Dürer reached Venice under very different circumstances from those in which he had left it eleven years before. He himself was greatly changed. No longer a timorous student, he arrived as an artist, whose name was on everybody's lips; and as he walked through the Rialto he must have been conscious of many admiring and perhaps jealous looks cast at the proud head with its wealth of silken golden curls, and the rich vestments with which his body was clad. Great was the honour paid to him.

Art in Venice moreover had entered upon an entirely new phase

since he had left it. The somewhat dry and unimaginative school of Alvise Vivarini was in its decline, and even that of the Bellini was on the wane. "Giovanni Bellini," as Dürer wrote to Pirkheimer, "is very old, but is still the best painter of them all." Jacopo de' Barbari was again abroad, having entered the service of Margaret of Austria, the Regent of the Netherlands. Dürer was now thirty years of age. Industry and success had taught him to appreciate his own genius, and at the same time to discriminate more critically among the works of others. And so he found that the works of art which had pleased him as a lad, entirely failed to hold their own with those with which he had become acquainted. Giovanni Bellini had reached the summit of his powers, and the great picture in the Church of San Zaccaria, the crowning work of his life, may have actually been on the easel when Dürer came to Venice in 1505. Gentile Bellini was about to bring a long and eventful life to its close, but was still alive. The two Bellini brothers were closely connected with the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, holding an important post from the Signoria of Venice with a large salary attached to it. Carpaccio was still in full work. But a new school had risen greater than any of these, destined to exercise a far wider influence, and to attain a more enduring reputation in history,—the school which is summed up in the magic name Giorgione. Giorgione was now twenty-five years of age, and most of his life-work was probably accomplished. With him the Renaissance of Art reached the point where it once and for all shook off the fetters of the Middle Ages. Art became once more frankly pagan although still retained in the service of the Church. Human life and the human body supplanted the Church and the Passion. Beauty supplanted mysticism, and symbolism was lost in colour. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," seems to be the motto of the pictures of Giorgione and his followers; for with all the gaiety, the love-making and music-making, depicted in his pictures, there is a tone of melancholy which speaks of the hopelessness of the day which has no morrow and the night which has no dawn. Titian and Palma followed close in the wake of Giorgione, and, as they all rose to maturity, painting glowed with the heat of a mid-day sun, and was resplendent with the hues of a summer garden. With this sensuous sight of art Dürer had little

sympathy. His mind was too much imbued with northern ideas to approve of art being allowed to riot upon walls and canvases of unlimited size. Still however he could not fail to appreciate the immense advance that painting had made at Venice during the eleven years that had elapsed since his first visit. Writing to Pirkheimer in February 1506, he says :—

How I wish you were here at Venice ! There are so many nice (*ärtiger*) companions among the Italians (*den Walchen*), who seek my company more and more every day,—which is very pleasing to one,—men of sense and knowledge, good lute-players and pipers, judges of painting, men of much noble sentiment and honest virtue ; and they show me much honour and friendship. On the other hand, there are also amongst them some of the most false, lying, thievish rascals ; I should never have believed that such were living in the world. If one did not know them one would think them the nicest people the earth could show. For my own part I cannot help laughing at them whenever they talk to me. They know that their knavery is no secret, but they don't mind.

Amongst the Italians I have many good friends, who warn me not to eat and drink with their painters. Many of them are my enemies, and they copy my work in the churches, and wherever they can find it, and then they revile it and say that the style is not *antique*, and so not good. But Giovanni Bellini (*Sambelling*) has highly praised me before many nobles (*Tzentillomen*). He wanted to have something of mine, and himself came to me and asked me to paint him something, and he would pay well for it. And all men tell me what an upright man he is, so that I am really friendly with him. He is very old, and is still the best painter.

Camerarius, in his eulogy of his deceased friend Dürer, narrates a story which is a pleasing record of the friendship between the aged Bellini and Dürer. “Bellini,” says Camerarius, “had the highest reputation as a painter at Venice, and indeed throughout all Italy. When Albrecht was there he easily became intimate with him, and both artists naturally began to show one another specimens of their skill. Albrecht frankly admired and made much of all Bellini's works. Bellini also candidly expressed his admiration of various features of Albrecht's skill, and particularly the fineness and delicacy with which he drew the hair. It chanced one day that they were talking about art, and when their conversation was done Bellini said : ‘Will you be so kind, Albrecht, as to gratify a friend in a small matter?’ ‘You shall soon see,’ says Albrecht, ‘if you will ask of me anything I can do for you.’ ‘Then,’ says Bellini, ‘I want you to make me a present of one of the brushes with which you draw hairs.’ Dürer at once produced

several, just like other brushes, and, in fact, of the kind Bellini himself used, and told him to choose those he liked best, or to take them all if he would. But Bellini, thinking he was misunderstood, said: 'No, I don't mean these, but the ones with which you draw several hairs with one stroke; they must be rather spread out and more divided, otherwise in a long sweep such regularity of curvature and distance could not be preserved.' 'I use no other than these,' says Albrecht, 'and to prove it you may watch me.' Then, taking up one of the same brushes, he drew some very long, wavy tresses, such as women generally wear, in the most regular order and symmetry. Bellini looked on wondering, and afterwards confessed to many that no human being could have convinced him by report of the truth of that which he had seen with his own eyes."

Dürer was better known in Venice as an engraver than a painter; and, as he was anxious no doubt to assert his skill in the latter walk of art, he excited first the incredulity and then the jealousy of the younger and more hot-headed painters. "The nobles," Dürer writes, "all wish me well, but few of the painters." Probably it was Giorgione, Titian, and their fellow-pupils who, perhaps from dislike of the reserved young German, when he actually received a working commission in Venice, resented his daring to enter into direct competition with them. Early in 1506 the German merchants commissioned Dürer to paint an altar-piece for the little Church of S. Bartolommeo adjoining the Fondaco de' Tedeschi, which was allotted to the German nation for their worship and their burying-place. This was a gauntlet thrown down to the painters at Venice, who did their best to make things disagreeable for him. He tells Pirkheimer that

The painters here, let me tell you, are very unfriendly to me. They have summoned me three times before the Signoria, and I have had to pay four florins to their school. You must also know that I might have gained a great deal of money if I had not undertaken to paint the German picture. There is much work in it, and I cannot get it quite finished before Whitsuntide. Yet they only pay me eighty-five ducats for it.

The German picture in question was the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, or the *Madonna del Rosario*. This festival had been founded by St. Dominic, who appears in the picture. The Virgin sits enthroned in the middle of the picture, placing with her left hand a garland of roses

on the head of the kneeling Emperor Maximilian. On her knees reclines the Child holding a similar garland towards the head of the kneeling Pope, Julius II. On either side kneel numerous other figures, on whose heads garlands of roses have been or are being placed by child angels under the direction of St. Dominic. Cherubs hold a richly-wrought crown over the Virgin's head, and others maintain the cloth above the throne. An angel sits and plays a lute on the steps of the throne. The portraits of the pope and the emperor were studied from medals, or from drawings by Ambrogio de Predis, for Dürer had not as yet encountered his future patron, Maximilian. The other persons represented are probably members of the German colony. One man, who seems to be an architect, as he holds a measuring square, is Hieronymus the German, who was engaged at the time in rebuilding the Fondaco. Among the others one may expect to identify one or more of the Fuggers from Augsburg, Anton Kolb, and Leonhard Hirschvogel of Nuremberg and others, whose names occur among those to whom *botteghe* were allotted in the new building. Dürer has signed the picture with his own portrait. He stands by a tree in the background with a friend beside him, who may be Pirkheimer. Dürer holds a scroll with the inscription *Exegit quinquemestri spatio Albertus Dürer Germanus MDVI.*, and his well-known monogram. Although this painting is for the greater part thoroughly German in conception and spirit, there are motives of an Italian origin in it which show how greatly Dürer was influenced by his surroundings. It lacks the statuesque simplicity of a *Holy Conversation* by Bellini, and the crowded juxtaposition of so many real portraits makes it wanting in the repose and fervour which resides in a more ideal rendering, such as Bellini or Cima was wont to give. According to Dürer's statement this picture took him five months to complete; but according to his letters it really took him longer, for he announces its commencement in January and does not speak of it as completed until September. As, however, there is a gap in his correspondence between April and August, the letter announcing its completion in June or July may have been lost. The preparatory drawings made by Dürer for this painting are very numerous. There are several in the Albertina collection at Vienna, others at Paris and Bremen, mostly on the same bluish paper, and dated 1506. The picture

itself was eventually purchased by the Emperor Rudolph II., who removed it to Prague, where it still belongs to the monastery of Strahow, although exhibited, in a much damaged state, in the Rudolphinum Gallery.

The *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, when finished, created a great sensation in Venice. Any feelings of dissatisfaction which Dürer may have felt with regard to his position among the painters at Venice must now have disappeared. He had vindicated his position as a painter, and silenced his critics, who had said that he was good at engraving, but did not know how to deal with colours. He was, moreover, treated with increased honour and respect. As he writes to Pirkheimer, "I have become a *gentleman* at Venice," no longer a mere huckster of jewellery, carpets, and other commodities. His return to Nuremberg, which was originally intended for the autumn of 1506, became further and further postponed. He even planned a journey to Rome in the train of the King of France. Meanwhile he writes that the Doge and the Patriarch have seen his picture, and that all the painters praised it. In September also he writes that he has finished "another *Quadro*, the like of which I have never painted before." It has been assumed, and not without some probability, that the *quadro* to which Dürer alludes is the curious *tempera* painting of *Christ among the Doctors* now in the Palazzo Barberini at Rome. This curious and, in its present condition, repellent composition is the very opposite of the elaborate work which he had just completed. In fact, whereas Dürer states on the *Feast of the Rose Garlands* that it took him five months to complete that picture, he as proudly states on the Barberini picture that it was the work of five days only, *opus quinque dierum*. The picture is really a group of seven heads, all apparently types of physiognomy, in more than one case very suggestive of those curious physiognomical studies by Leonardo da Vinci. There is little attempt at composition; and the painting is, as might have been expected, hasty, only a thin glazing of oil having been laid over the *tempera*. It is all however unmistakably Dürer's work. As numerous drawings exist for the heads in this picture, as well as for the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, the suggestion may be hazarded that the *Christ among the Doctors* is really nothing more than a group of studies of heads and hands, put together so as to form a connected picture. If this was the case, it is easier to understand how Dürer could have executed it in five days, the

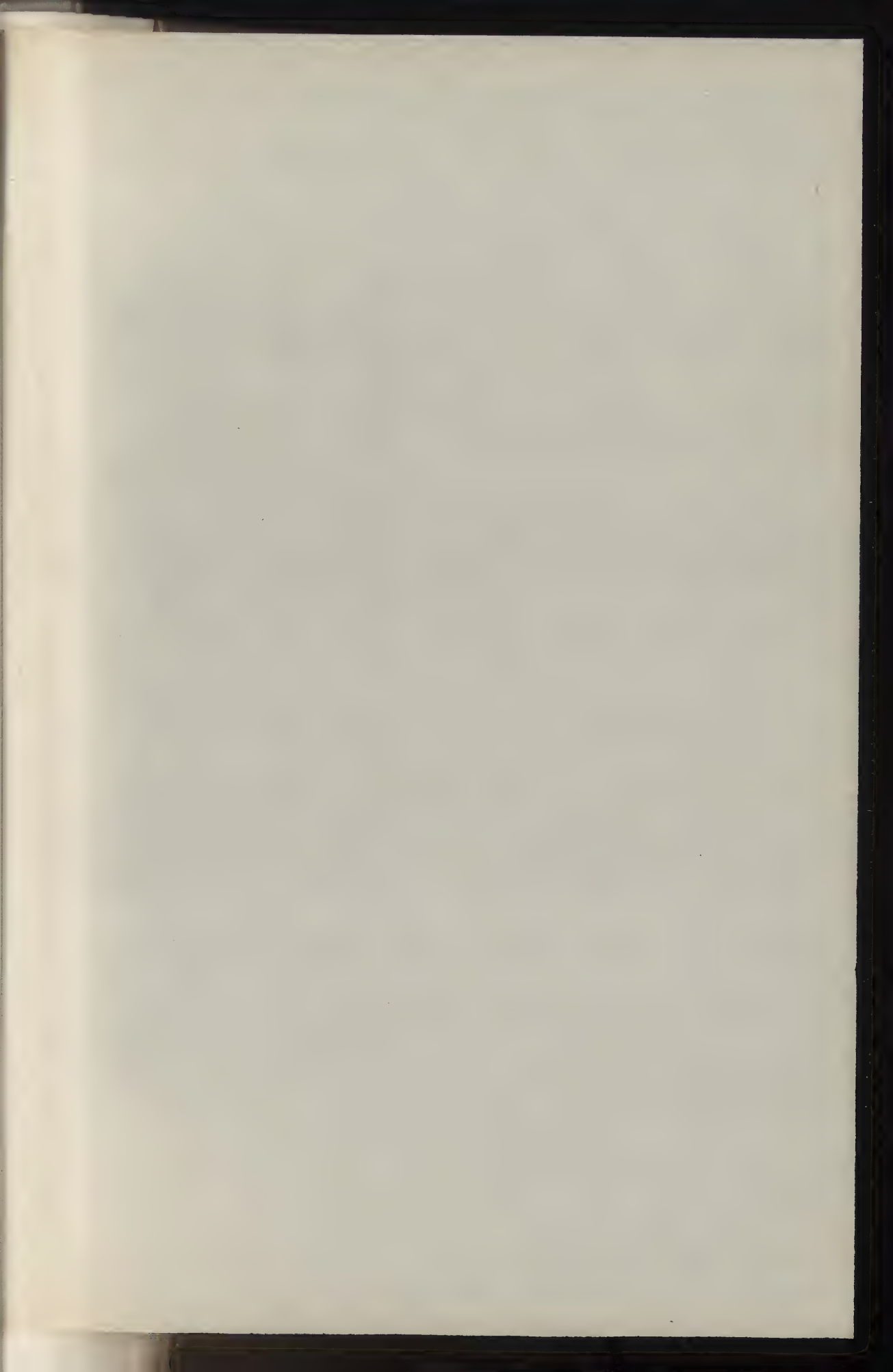


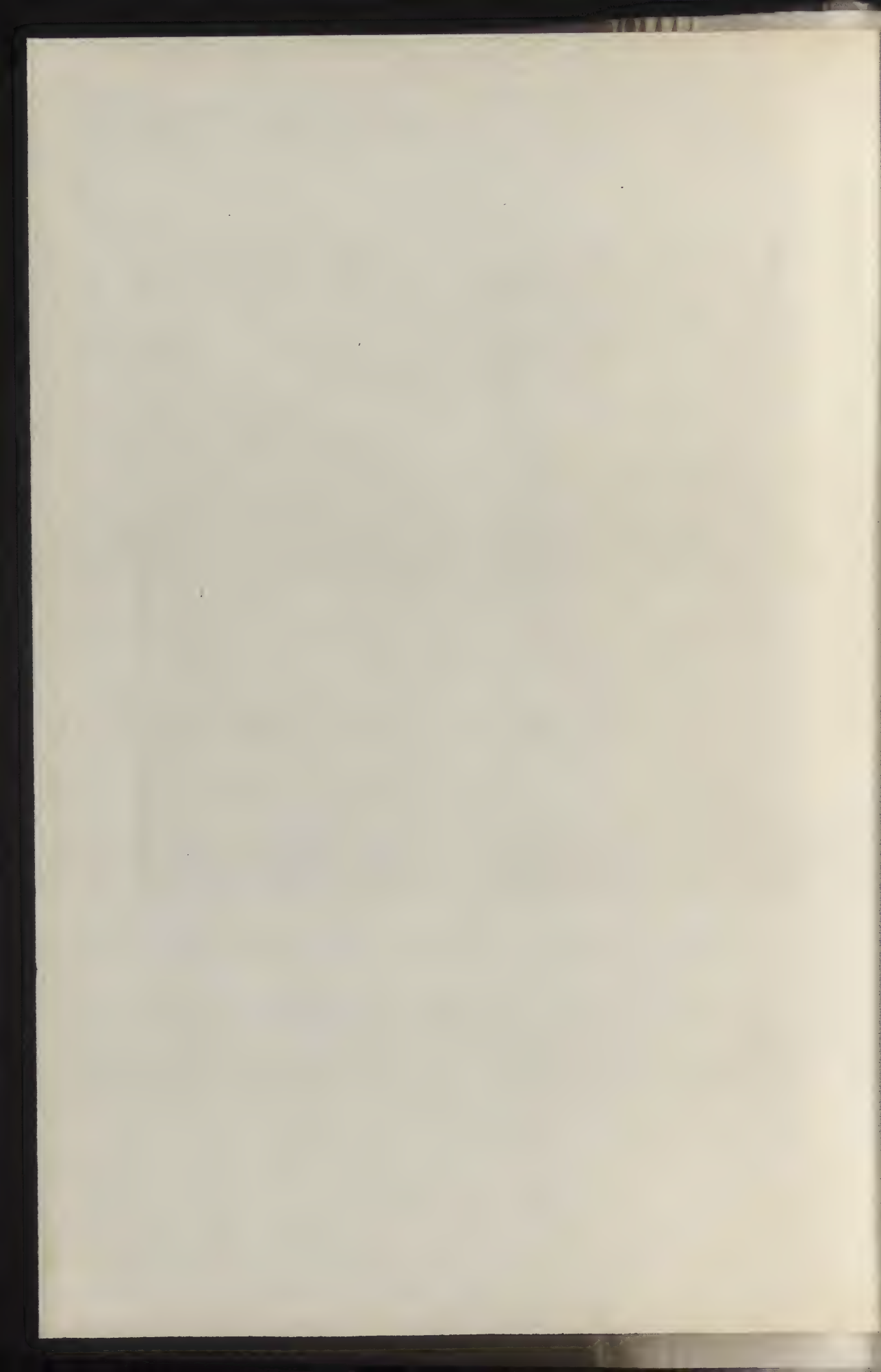
The Feast of the Rose Garlands. Prague. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.

preliminary drawings, on which he spent so much care and trouble, being in this case already completed.

Another picture, however, painted at this date may not unreasonably claim to be the *quadro*, the like of which Dürer had never painted before. This is the exquisite little *Christ on the Cross*, now in the Royal Picture Gallery at Dresden. In this marvellous little picture the blending of German and Italian feeling is carried out with the greatest success. It may be doubted whether any painting of the Italian or any other school can rival this little panel-painting, only $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches high by 6 inches broad, in intensity and nobility of expression, in truth and precision of drawing, and in charm and richness of colour. Executed like a miniature painting, it is as large in conception and rendering as an altar-piece of Bellini or Raphael. The body of the crucified Saviour is German but without the hard bony conventions of northern art. It hangs relieved against a dark and sullen sky, which breaks behind the foot of the Cross into a low sunset horizon reflected in a deep-blue lake bounded by the purple hills in the shadows of evening. A few thin trees help to accentuate the solitude and pathos of the situation. Small as the painting is, it can never fail to impress, and it may be regarded as the high-water mark of Dürer's painting.

Another important painting, executed by Dürer at Venice in 1506, has only recently been treated with the respect which it deserves. This is the *Virgin with the Finch* which was lately acquired by the authorities of the Berlin Picture Gallery from the Marquess of Lothian's collection at Newbattle Abbey. The Virgin sits before a crimson curtain, gazing out of the picture with long golden hair flowing over her shoulders. On her lap sits the Child, holding in his right hand what appears to be a bird-lure, with which he has attracted a finch, who has settled on his left arm. The Virgin holds a sprig of lilies of the valley to the infant St. John, who stands with an angel by her left knee. Above her head float two cherubs holding a garland of flowers. This painting shows a distinct link between those done by Dürer before his journey to Venice and the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*. A group of ruins in the background is in some respects identical with that in the Baumgärtner *Nativity* at Munich; while it is easy to recognise in the golden-haired Madonna, the Babe, and the crown-supporting cherubs the chief motives of the *Feast of the*







Albrecht Dürer Pinxt.

From a Photograph by Braun 1860

Walter L. Hollaender

The Crucifixion.



Rose Garlands. The *Madonna with the Finch* must have been executed very soon after the Venice picture, if not indeed actually before, for it is signed and dated 1506. The painting found its way to Holyrood, where it belonged to the Earl of Buchan, at the disposal of whose effects it was relegated to a dealer's shop in Edinburgh. It was seen there and purchased by the late Marquess of Lothian, and has now become one of the ornaments of the Berlin Gallery at a considerably enhanced price. It is an open secret that the painting might have been acquired for the National Gallery!

Dürer also exercised his skill in portraiture at Venice, and alludes to various paintings of this sort. Few can be identified now, but one is preserved in the royal collection at Hampton Court, unduly neglected and overlooked by the connoisseur. It is a portrait of a young man, with a smooth, ruddy face, and hair done in the Italian fashion,¹ such as is seen in the portraits by Antonello da Messina and Giovanni Bellini, the influence of whom, especially the former, is unmistakable.

It is not surprising, after these performances, to hear that the Signoria of Venice offered Dürer a sinecure post with a good salary if he would take up his permanent residence at Venice. It must have been a great temptation to Dürer. Money was hard to earn in the somewhat stingy north, and it seemed likely to flow in upon him at Venice. Yet his heart was in his home at Nuremberg; and he did not, like Holbein, for the sake of fame and money desert his family, who were dependent upon him for their livelihood. He writes in boisterous spirits to Pirkheimer, promising to return home; but he cannot refrain from adding, "How I shall freeze after this sun! Here I am a gentleman, at home only a parasite (*Schmarotzer*)!"

One honour intended to be paid to Dürer was, alas! never bestowed. The great Mantegna, then bringing a long life to a close at Mantua, expressed a desire to see Dürer in person. Camerarius tells the tale as follows: "While Andrea was lying ill at Mantua he heard that Albrecht was in Italy, and had him summoned to his side at once, in order that he might fortify his (Albrecht's) facility and certainty of hand with scientific knowledge and principles. For Andrea often lamented in

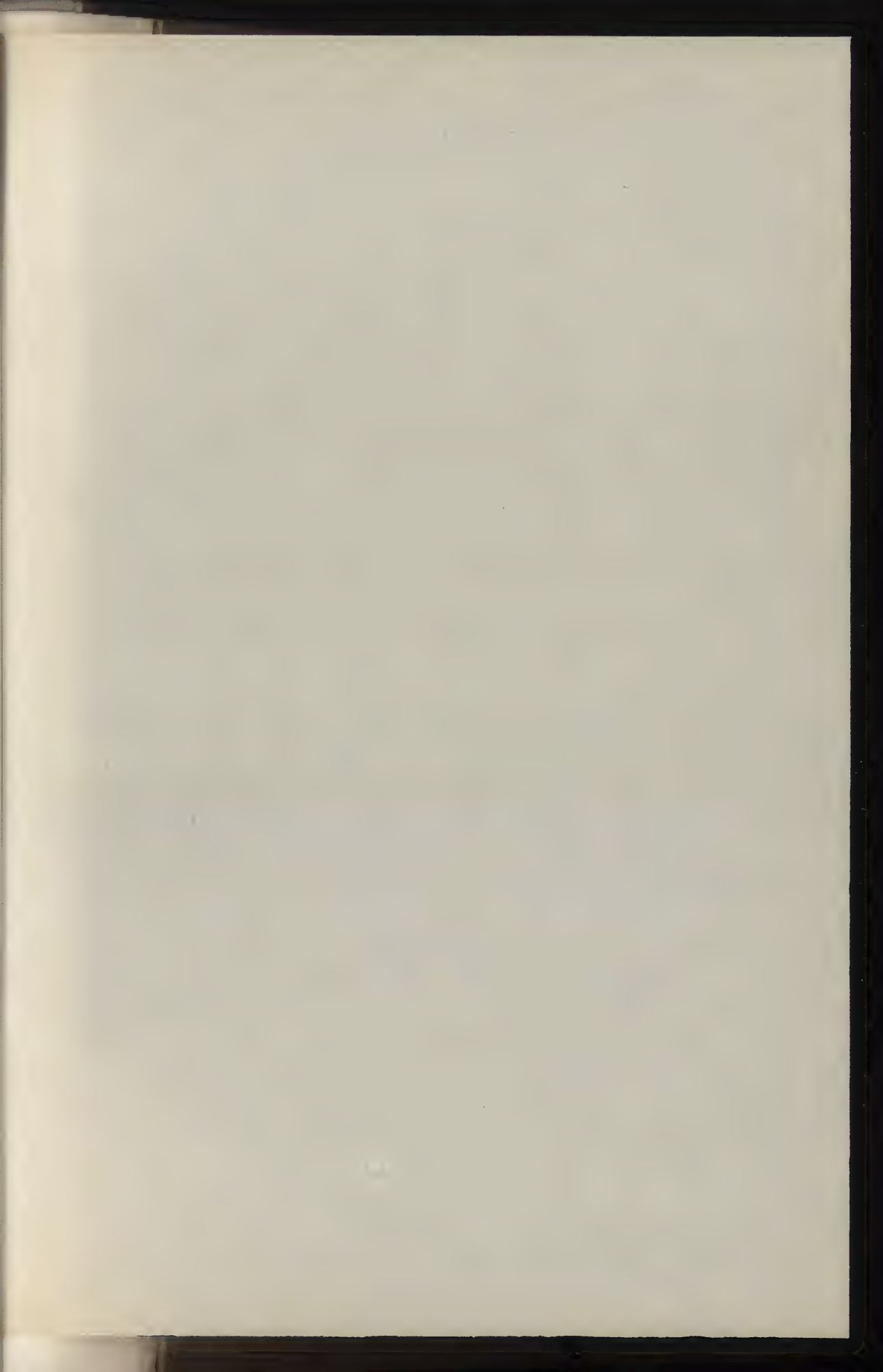
¹ A reproduction of this portrait was given in the *Portfolio* for January 1896, at page 108.

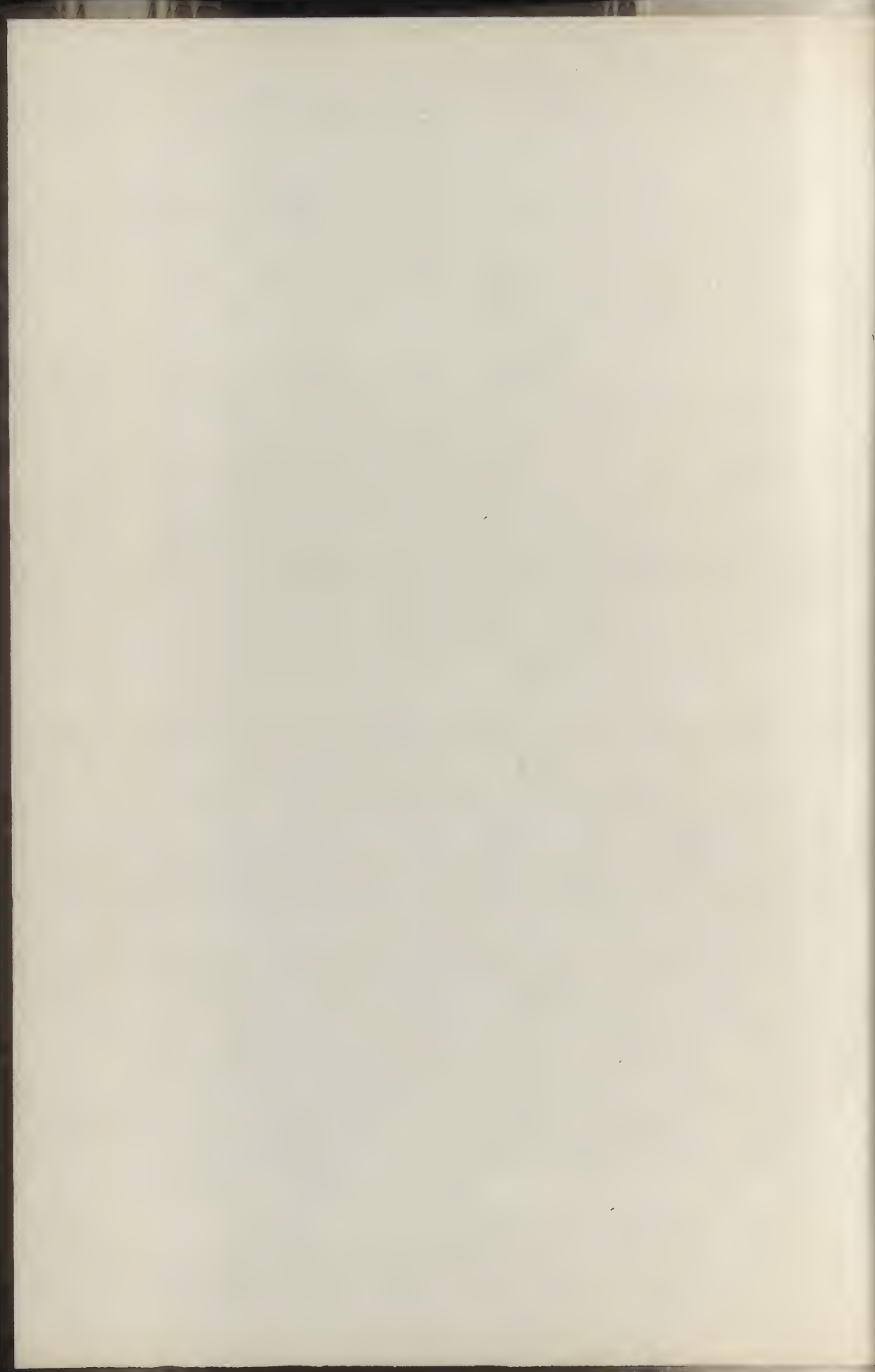
conversation with his friends that Albrecht's facility in drawing had not been granted to him nor his learning to Albrecht. On receiving the message, Albrecht, leaving all other engagements, prepared for the journey without delay. But before he could reach Mantua Andrea was dead, and Dürer used to say that this was the saddest event in all his life; for, high as Albrecht stood, his great and lofty mind was ever striving after something yet above him." Mantegna died at Mantua on September 13, 1506. A month later Dürer writes to Pirkheimer as follows:—

In reply to your question when I shall come home, I tell you, so that my lords may also make their arrangements, that I shall have finished here in ten days; after that I should like to ride to Bologna to learn the secrets of the art of perspective, which a man is willing to teach me. I should stay there eight or ten days and then return to Venice.

That Dürer accomplished this journey is known from a statement by Christoph Scheurl, who states that the painters of Bologna in his presence conferred on Dürer the dignity of "Prince of painters," stating that they would die more joyfully now that they had accomplished their long-cherished desire of seeing Albert. It was not, however, until early in 1507 that Dürer found himself back in Nuremberg, where, according to a note on his domestic affairs, "in the thirteenth year of my wedlock I have paid great debts with what I earned at Venice."

During his residence at Venice in 1506 Dürer had not forgotten his favourite study, that of Human Proportion, the love of which he had first acquired in the same locality. His ideas on the subject had ripened considerably since he was first introduced to it by Jacopo de' Barbari; and he was much better equipped with mind and pencil to study the nude, than when he used to frequent the public baths at Nuremberg for the same purpose. There are drawings for a figure of Eve, in the British Museum and elsewhere, dated 1506 and 1507, which show how much the subject had occupied his attention at Venice. It is uncertain, however, if the companion paintings of *Adam* and *Eve*, now in the Pitti Gallery at Florence, were completed before or after his departure from Italy. Two such paintings were formerly in the Rathhaus at Nuremberg, and sold from thence to the Emperor Rudolph II. These may be the paintings now in the Pitti, which possibly found their way there with the Austrian Grand-Dukes. Copies or *replicas* are now in





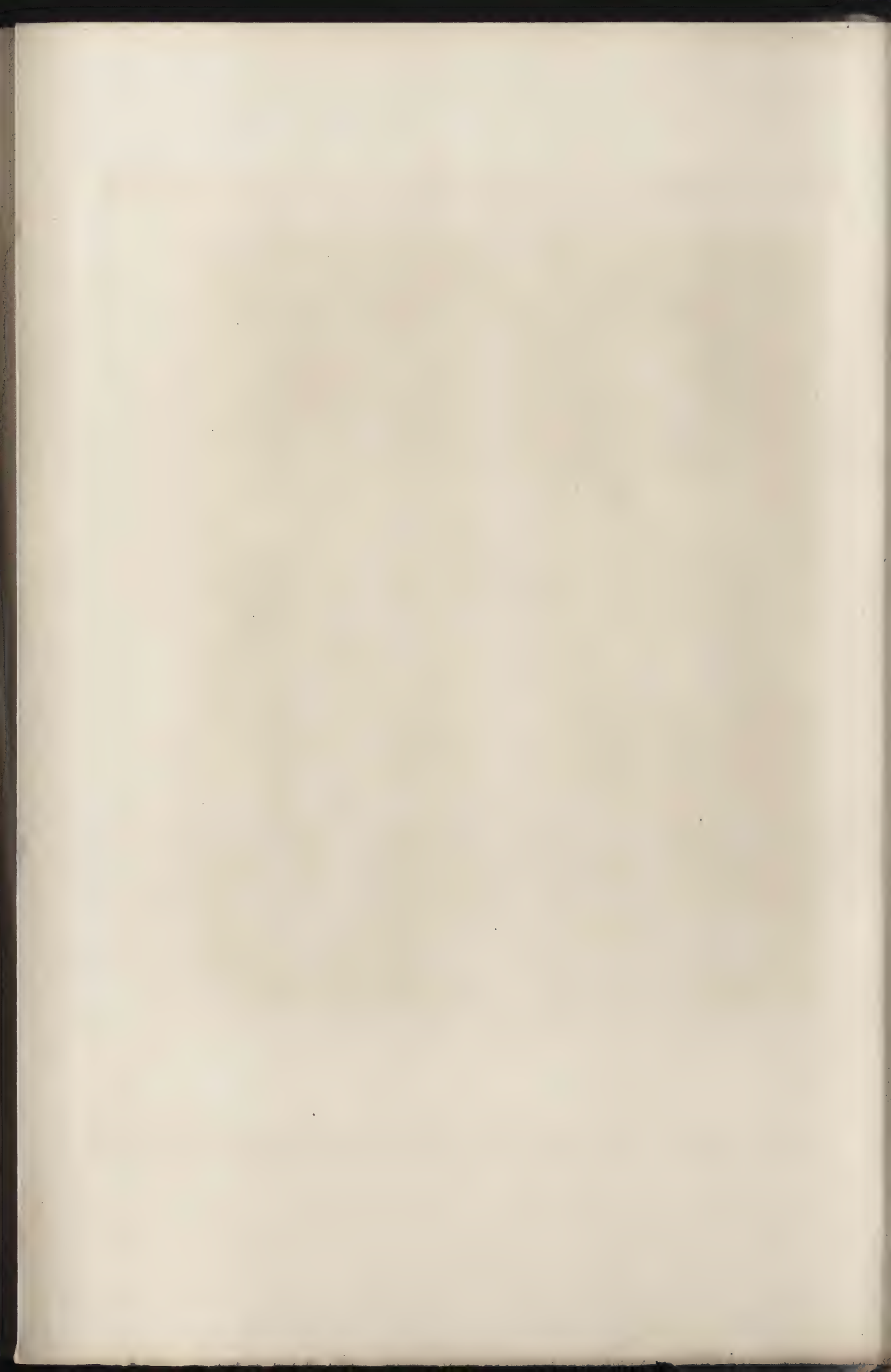


A. Dürer pinx.

A. Braun & Co. Photo

F. Jenani Hellog. Paris

The Virgin with the Finch



the Prado Gallery at Madrid. The version on one panel of the same paintings at Mainz appears to be the copy done to replace those



Adam and Eve. Pitti Gallery, Florence. From Photographs by Alinari.

removed from the Rathaus at Nuremberg. The figures show a great advance on the *Adam and Eve* in the famous engraving of 1504. They are more broadly, more humanly treated than before. They show a

more natural and more sympathetic rendering of the living body, and are not unworthy of being compared with such voluptuous renderings of the nude, as the *Adam and Eve* by Palma Vecchio in the Brunswick Gallery. On the other hand, of the sensuous or passionate aspect of the nude there is not a trace. The nude to Dürer was merely the perfection of form and construction. He could never have produced the *Sleeping Venus* of Giorgione, or any of the *Bacchanals* of Titian. Particularly characteristic of Dürer are the animals introduced, a boar and a stag with a cock pheasant in the *Adam*; a sleeping lioness, parrots, and partridges in the *Eve*. These occur only in the paintings at Florence, and connect them at once with the famous engraving of 1504.

This triumphant rendering of the nude figure, if executed before leaving Venice, would have been the crown of Dürer's success as a painter in Italy. Its fame may have been the cause of his receiving his next commission, which came from his old patron, Frederick the Wise of Saxony, after his return from Italy. There is nothing to show that the burghers of Nuremberg did anything to recognise the position in which Dürer now stood among European painters. While the Signoria of Venice offered him a comfortable post and salary if he would only take up his residence at Venice, his native town of Nuremberg made no sign; and Dürer was obliged, as before, to get his commissions from outside. Truly does it seem that the German merchant was regarded as Pogner says in *Die Meistersinger*:—

In deutschen Landen viel gereis't,
hat oft es mich verdrossen,
dass man den Bürger wenig preis't
ihn karg nennt und verschlossen;
an Höfen, wie an niederer Statt,
des litt'ren Tadels ward ich satt,
dass nur auf Schacher und Geld
sein Merk' der Bürger stellt'.

Truly, as Dürer had written, at Venice he was a gentleman, at home a parasite.

Dürer had already utilised his studies of the nude in one of his large woodcuts, in which he had depicted the martyrdom of the ten thousand saints of Nicomedia under King Sapor of Persia. The Elector of Saxony

now gave him a commission for a large painting of the same subject, the choice being determined, not by the gruesome and repulsive nature of the subject, but for the innumerable advantages it gave for depicting the nude human body in every position. Perhaps the choice of subject was left to Dürer himself, for there is a sketch composition of the same subject at Vienna, differently composed, which shows that he was much occupied over it. This painting occupied him a long time, and was not completed until 1508, when he signed it, as in the *Madonna del Rosario*, with portraits of himself and Pirkheimer, as spectators of the scene. Dürer, who in this portrait has discarded his coat of many colours for a



AD

Christ bearing the Cross. From a Drawing in the British Museum.



AD

The Adoration of the Kings. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

garb of simple black, holds a scroll inscribed *Iste faciebat anno domini 1508, Albertus Dürer Alemanus*, so proud was he still of his distinction, not only as a painter, but as a German painter. The crowded mass of small figures is very skilfully dealt with, and shows great forethought in the composition. It can hardly be doubted that the repute of this picture caused the famous Venetian painter, Carpaccio, to paint a similar painting of the same subject in 1515. Great as Carpaccio's talents were, they failed him here, for his painting is a confused and ill-arranged mass of bodies, depending more on general effect than on detailed arrangement. If the two paintings are compared, the German artist has an easy victory.

Before Dürer had finished this painting for the Elector of Saxony, he received a fresh commission for an important work, not from Nuremberg

or any of its citizens, but from a rich and pious merchant of Frankfurt-on-the-Maine, Jacob Heller, who happened to be on a visit at Nuremberg. Heller invited Dürer to paint an *Assumption of the Virgin* for the Dominican Church of St. Thomas at Frankfurt, to which he was a benefactor, and where he intended to be buried. A series of letters have been preserved from Dürer to Heller on the subject of this painting, which, if they strike a discordant note in the peaceful tenor of Dürer's life, throw a valuable light upon his method and ideas of painting. The picture was to consist of a central subject, containing the "Assumption," the Virgin seated in the clouds, crowned by God the Father and by Christ; while the disciples are grouped round the empty tomb on earth below. Dürer made numberless careful studies for the different parts of this picture, and no less than twenty-one have been preserved, for the most part executed in Indian ink, heightened with white, upon a prepared greenish-gray ground. Writing to Heller in August 1507 Dürer says that his work for the Duke of Saxony has been delayed by an attack of fever, so that he has not yet got to work on Heller's picture.

Although I have not yet begun the panel, I have got it from the joiner and have paid away for it the money you gave me. He would not lower his price for it, though I thought he did not deserve so much. I have given it to a preparer, who has whitened it and painted it and will put on the gilding next week. I did not want to receive any money in advance for it till I began to paint it, which, if God will, shall be the next thing after the Prince's work; for I do not like to begin too many things at once, that I may not become wearied.

Dürer, however, had not been able to begin Heller's picture by March 1508, for he writes then :—

In a fortnight I shall be ready with Duke Friedrich's work; after that I shall make a beginning with your work, and, as my custom is, I will not paint any other picture till it is finished. I will be sure carefully to paint the middle panel (*das mittler Blatt*) with my own hand; apart from that, the outer sides of the wings are already sketched in—they will be in stone-colour; I have also had the ground laid.

In August 1508 Dürer reports progress to his somewhat impatient patron :—

The wings (he says) have been painted in stone-colours on the outside, but they are not yet varnished; inside, the whole of the ground has been laid so that

it is ready to paint on. The middle panel (*Dass Caput*) I have outlined with the greatest care and at cost of much time; it is also laid over with two very good colours upon which I can begin to paint the ground. For I intend, so soon as I hear that you approve, to paint the ground some four, five, or six times over, for clearness' and durability's sake, using the very best ultramarine for the purpose that I can get. And no one shall paint a stroke on it except myself, and I shall devote much time to it.

In his book on painting Dürer says :—

In order to make such things, it is well for a man, first of all, to draw the outlines of his picture as he intendeth it to be, before he setteth about his work, so that he may see whether there be not something in the figures that might be improved. . . . It is therefore needful for every artist to learn to draw well, for this is beyond measure serviceable in many arts, and much dependeth thereon.

Dürer adds, in the last letter quoted, that he hopes that Heller's patience will not be tried. Moreover, that it will cost him much more than the 130 Rhenish florins, for which he had bargained, if he painted it as carefully as he wished to do. Heller's patience was however tried, and the letters become a trifle acrimonious in their tone. In November 1508 Dürer complains very much of Heller's language to others respecting Dürer's share in the bargain, and declares that he has not broken his promise in any way. He was using the best and most expensive colours, and doing no other work except Heller's. As for the greatest possible pains to be taken, Dürer says that if he did that, the painting would never be finished, as it would take him six months to finish the face alone. Moreover, such minute finishing was not required in an altar-piece, where it could not be seen. In March 1509 Dürer informs Heller that he has been steadily working at his picture since the preceding Easter, and that no payment in money could recoup him for his trouble and expenses. He intended, however, to finish the picture for his own honour as much as Heller's. He was prepared for adverse criticism, but only cared for praise from those whose opinion was of any value. July came and the picture was not delivered. Dürer writes that he does not intend to hurry over it and slur his work, and offers to return Heller his money if Heller now did not want to have the picture. However, the picture was nearly finished, and Dürer writes rather severely to Heller offering

to send him the picture, although he could get elsewhere nearly double the amount agreed to be paid for it.

I only wish (he writes) I had painted it just in the way you bargained for—I should have finished it in half a year.

In August 1509 Dürer at last writes to Heller that he has packed up the picture and handed it over to Imhoff, the banker, to be sent to Frankfurt.

I have painted it with great care (he reiterates), as you will see. It has also been painted with the best colours I could get. It is painted with good ultramarine, under and over, and over that again, some five or six times; and then after it was finished I painted it again twice over, so that it may last a long time. If it be kept clean I know it will remain bright and fresh five hundred years, for it is not done as men are wont to paint.

Again he writes :—

If any one wants to see it, let it hang forward two or three finger-breadths, for then the light is good to see by. And when I come over to you, say in one, two, or three years' time, if the picture is properly dry, it must be taken down, and I will varnish it over anew with some excellent varnish, which no one else can make; it will then last a hundred years longer than it would before. But don't let anybody else varnish it, for all other varnishes are yellow, and the picture would be ruined for you. And if a thing on which I have spent more than a year's work were ruined, it would be grief to me. When you have it set up, be present yourself to see that it gets no harm. Deal carefully with it, for you will hear from your own and from foreign painters how it is done.

By October of the same year Heller had received the picture and expressed his satisfaction. Dürer writes in reply in a cheerful mood, thanking Heller for his kindness, and saying that he would rather have kept Heller's friendship than get a greater price for the picture.

For a hundred years the *Assumption* hung in the church at Frankfurt over Heller's grave. Then the Emperor Rudolph II., a consistent admirer of Dürer's work, tried to get it for 10,000 florins (Heller had paid Dürer 130 florins!). Unluckily the prize fell to the Elector Maximilian of Bavaria, who carried it off to Munich, where it was destroyed by fire in the Palace, in April 1674. It had been replaced in the church by a copy executed by Paul Juvenel of Nuremberg, a skilful painter, and this remains with the original wings in the Saalhof

at Frankfurt. On the wings, which were probably completed by Dürer's assistants, are inside the Martyrdoms of St. James and St. Catherine, with portraits of Jacob Heller and his wife Katharina von Melem below them; and on the outside four groups of saints in "stone-colour."



A Flagellant. From a Drawing in the British Museum (for a Wood-Engraving).

The central subject is signed, as usual, by a standing portrait of Dürer himself, in a gray dress edged with red, pointing to the statement that he, the German, had painted it in 1509.

In one of his earlier letters to Heller, Dürer speaks of a *Madonna*

painted by him, which Dürer says Heller had noticed in his house. Later on he says that he has sold it to the Bishop of Breslau for 72 florins, which sum Dürer had some difficulty in recovering. This may be the painting of the Virgin in a scarlet robe, with a tall plant of iris by her, signed and dated 1508, which is now in the collection of Sir Francis Cook at Richmond, but it has suffered so much that it is difficult to trace with certainty the actual hand of Dürer in it. A copy of this picture is at Prague.

It is evident that painting in Dürer's manner was hardly productive of good business. To paint one picture in more than a whole year, and to exhaust all the money agreed upon in the materials for the picture, was hardly the way to support a wife and aged mother in addition to the ordinary expenses of life. It is not surprising, therefore, that Dürer should write to Heller :—

No one shall ever compel me to paint a picture again with so much labour. Herr Georg Tausy himself besought me to paint him a Madonna in a landscape with the same care and of the same size as this picture, and he would give me four hundred florins for it. That I flatly refused to do, for it would have made a beggar of me. Of ordinary pictures, I will, in a year, paint a pile which no one would believe it possible for one man to do in the time. But very careful nicety does not pay. So, henceforth, I shall stick to my engraving ; and, had I done so before, I should to-day have been a richer man by one thousand florins.

So Dürer determined to give up painting on so elaborate a scale, and to devote all his skill and patience to the more profitable trade of engraving. In 1508 he obtained from the Town Council of Nuremberg a privilege to prevent the fraudulent copying of his prints. He set to work and completed the *St. Eustace*, the *Nemesis*, and other important single engravings. He finished and prepared for publication in book form the *Life of Mary*, the *Great Passion*, and the *Little Passion*, and to this series of wood-engravings he added a new edition of his *Apocalypse*. He commenced also his series of *The Passion*, engraved upon copper. Moreover, he quitted his old home, "Unter der Vesten," and removed to the well-known house in the Zistelgasse by the Thiergärtnerthor. In 1510 he began his experiments in engraving with the dry point, and with aqua fortis.

In spite however of his resolution to abandon painting on the grand

scale, he had accepted a commission for a great picture, which proved the most important which he ever executed. A Nuremberg worthy, one Matthäus Landauer, smith and statue founder, had been concerned in



The Adoration of the Trinity. Imperial Gallery, Vienna.

From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.

the erection of an almshouse, dedicated to All Saints. In 1508 he added a chapel to this, and Dürer was invited to paint an altar-piece for it, representing "The Adoration of the Trinity by All Saints."

The painting is the simplest and most complete conception of Dürer's matured genius. The Holy Trinity floats in the air suspended by choiring angels, and adored by tiers of saints, who float around and below the divine group. Below lies, radiant in evening light, an exquisite view of a land-locked lake with wooded hills, perhaps a reminiscence of the Lago di Garda, on one side of which stands the painter holding a tablet with an inscription. On this he records that it was the work of Albrecht Dürer of Nuremberg. *Albertus Dürer Noricus faciebat anno a Virginis Partu, 1511*. It was the first painting he had executed with his own hands for his native town. In the upper tier of saints are those who were the recognised inmates of heaven,—Moses, David, John the Baptist, Catherine, Barbara, Agnes, and others. Below float the Emperor, the Pope, and other good men and women, drawn from every rank of life, and containing a number of contemporary portraits. It is one of the noblest pictures ever painted, and may be compared with the famous *Disputa* by Raphael in the Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican. For this painting Dürer designed an architectural frame of great beauty, in the Italian Renaissance style. A drawing for this frame in the collection of the Duc d'Aumale is dated 1508. It is possible, therefore, that the painting was promised to Landauer during that year before the experience of Heller's picture had caused Dürer to determine never to attempt pictures on this scale again. In 1585 the Town Council of Nuremberg robbed Landauer's almshouses of the *Allerheiligenbild* and sold it to the Emperor Rudolph II. It now hangs in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna. The Town Council generously replaced it by a copy, for which they retained the original frame. Among the saints in the lower group on the left hand is the donor, Landauer, kneeling in modest awe. A drawing for this portrait, executed in black chalk, and dated 1511, formerly in Mr. Mitchell's collection, is, curiously enough, the only drawing known to exist as an original study for this picture.

This was the last of Dürer's "great" pictures. He continued to paint Madonnas, such as the *Virgin with the Cut Pear* of 1512, now in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna, and the *Virgin with the Pink* at Augsburg, painted in 1516, in which Dürer is obviously trying to construct a figure amounting to strictly measured proportions, taking a simple



The Madonna with the Pink. Augsburg Gallery. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.



German woman as his model. His studies of the nude figure were still carried on, and in 1518 he produced from them his painting of *Lucretia* at Munich, a not very pleasing composition. Engraving, and the cares of publication, now occupied Dürer's mind, and he was able also to develop a wonderful skill in decorative and ornamental design, for which he had hitherto found but little scope.

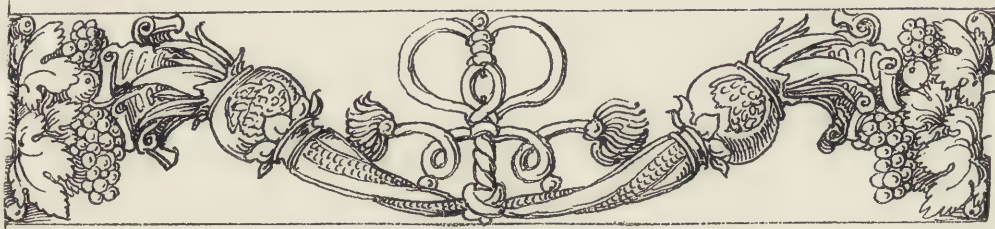
CHAPTER IV

Return to Nuremberg—Commission for the Town Council—The Emperor Maximilian—Journey to the Netherlands—Return to Nuremberg—Letter to the Town Council—The Four Temperaments—Dürer's death—His position as a painter—Nuremberg and the works of Dürer—Dürer's paintings and drawings.

DÜRER now settled down to a regular life as a citizen of Nuremberg, working at his engravings and woodcuts; sometimes, in the daytime, painting portraits of his friends and an occasional Madonna. In 1510 the Town Council of Nuremberg discovered, apparently for the first time, that they had an artist of European reputation among their fellow-citizens, and so they gave him what no doubt seemed to their minds an important and munificent commission. Every Easter a festival was held in Nuremberg, known as the *Heiligthumfest*, or, more colloquially, as *Heiltum*, when various relics of a sacred and historical nature were exhibited on a stage in the market-place for the awe and veneration of the crowd. Among these relics were treasured the crown of Charlemagne, and various insignia of King Sigismund of Bohemia, who had been a benefactor to the town. So the Town Council put their hands into the town-purse, and no doubt after the usual wrangle, with which such bodies inaugurate any unusual expenditure of this kind, they commissioned Dürer to paint two large portraits of Charlemagne and Sigismund to be shown at the festival. Such was the work given by these worthy citizens, the Beckmessers of their day, to the painter of the *Feast of the Rose Garlands*, the *Assumption*, and *All Saints*! Dürer however was not a man to stint his work, and he made most careful and accurate studies of all the relics which he had to introduce into these pictures, although, as might have been expected, he did not waste too

much time on the actual painting. As a Nuremberg citizen, he would treat with reverence the objects which he had been accustomed from his childhood to gaze on with awestruck eyes. The two paintings were not completed until 1512. They still remain at Nuremberg in the German Museum; but Dürer's handiwork has long been concealed, if not altogether destroyed, by repeated re-paintings. Dürer received 85 florins for the two; Heller had paid him 130 florins for a single painting, and that had not covered the cost of material!

In the portrait of Charlemagne Dürer has introduced the features of a man with whom he became acquainted at this time, and with whom



Decorative Designs. From Drawings in the British Museum.

he was to be associated in many ways during the next few years. This was Joannes Stabius, historian and poet-laureate to the Emperor Maximilian, who came with his imperial patron to Nuremberg in February 1512.

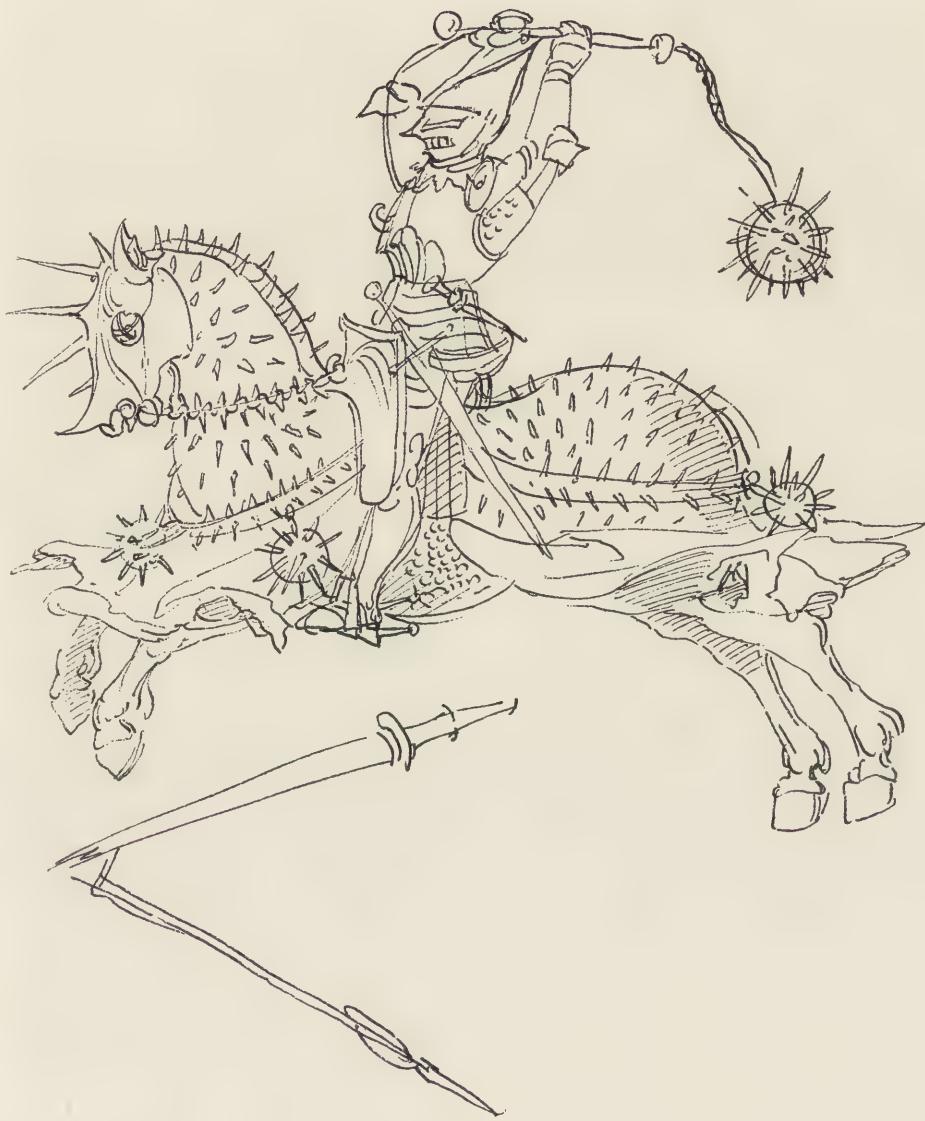
Some account has been given in the former monograph of the work on which Dürer was employed by Maximilian for the next two or three years. A new field was opened for the exercise of Dürer's art, one in which it had been somewhat restrained by the limitations of subject in his paintings and engravings. As a decorative artist, Dürer now gave full play to the lighter and more sportive side of his genius. Nothing was too large, too tall, no ideas too vast to satisfy the wishes of a man

like Maximilian. Everything which he did, or commanded to be done, was to be on the biggest possible scale, and the work of the best artists. The only essential matter was that every book, print, drawing, painting, should be for the glory of Maximilian. In Augsburg, Nuremberg, Prague, in every important town throughout the Holy Roman Empire, the best artists were busied night and day upon the greatest achievements, certainly in size, which the engraver's art could produce. Many felt, in anticipation, the gold chain of merit already on their shoulders, and the gold pieces weighty in the wallet at their waist. Alas! however, for human hopes and the words of Princes, for in most cases the chain was but the fetters of servitude, and the gold pieces, as in the fairy-tale, turned out but dry leaves in the end.

Occupied as he was in the drawings for the *Triumphal Arch*, the *Triumphal Car*, the *Triumph of Maximilian*, the *Patron Saints of the House of Austria*, on designs for armour and jewellery for the Emperor's adornment, Dürer had but little spare time for painting, although it was during these years that he produced some of his most important engravings. His domestic life was clouded by the loss of his beloved mother, and to his temperament at this date are due his most important engravings, as described in the previous monograph. As the great French artist, Jean François Millet, said in later days, "Le douleur est, peut être, ce qui fait le plus exprimer les artistes." Such time as he was able to devote to painting was chiefly occupied in studying experiments, such as the heads of the apostles Philip and James, painted in *tempera* in 1516, and now in the Uffizii at Florence. Meanwhile Stabius also kept him at work upon designs for astronomical tables and the like. One commission from Maximilian brought out the latent wit and humour of Dürer's mind, the true "humanist" disposition. Among the many magnificent orders given by Maximilian was one to Schönsperger, the chief printer at Augsburg, to print a *Book of Hours* on fine vellum leaves with large margins, a special fount of type being cast for the printing; for nothing that had been used before could be good enough for so great an Emperor. One copy was sent to Dürer, who was instructed to ornament it with illustrations drawn in the margins, the design and invention being left to Dürer himself. Whatever may have been the shortcomings of Maximilian's character, he

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Design for Armour. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

most certainly possessed a keen enough power of observation to be able to discern in an artist the true bent of that artist's genius. Dürer's genius distinctly showed an inclination to ornament, as indicated by his love of fine clothes and his golden curls, and his countless sketches of what was gayest and most picturesque or curious in nature.

On the margins of Maximilian's *Book of Hours*, which is now in the Royal Library at Munich, Dürer has conceived a series, linked together by flowers and tendrils, of playful fancies, religious scenes or figures, fairy-tales, devilries, landscapes, animals, insects, all designed and drawn in with the care and skill of a mediæval illuminator. The difference between Dürer's marginal drawings and the mediæval miniaturists lies in Dürer's complete freedom from convention, the copiousness of his invention, and the originality and appropriateness of his designs. This method of illustrating books may have been originally due to Pirkheimer, for it is known that there were at least sixteen books in Pirkheimer's library which were so illustrated by Dürer. One of these, an Aldine edition of *Theocritus* illustrated by Dürer in 1524, was recently in the collection of the late Mr. Hartley. Maximilian may have been shown one of these volumes by Pirkheimer, who was in high favour at the imperial court, and so expressed his desire to have some volumes adorned in a similar way for his own imperial delectation. In all the drawings and engravings executed for Maximilian the Emperor took a keen and personal interest. The designs were all submitted to him, and in many cases he seems to have supplied the original ideas himself. These ideas he communicated to his agents in the matter, Pirkheimer and Melchior Pfinzing at Nuremberg, Stabius and Marx Treitzsauerwein at Augsburg, and they saw that the Emperor's meaning was interpreted by the best artists of the day. Most of the drawings, miniature paintings, wood-blocks, etc., which were in progress at the time of Maximilian's sudden death are still preserved in the imperial collections at Vienna. They afford a most valuable opportunity of contrasting the work of contemporary artists,—Dürer and his school at Nuremberg with Hans Burgkmair and his school at Augsburg. Good as the designs of Burgkmair are, it is easy to discern the superiority of these, which are obviously from the hand or mind of Dürer.

With the death of Maximilian in 1519 all the foundations of Dürer's

prosperity seemed to crumble away. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1518 Dürer had attended as one of the representatives of the Nuremberg Town Council. Here he met Maximilian in person, and was admitted to personal intercourse with him. He drew Maximilian's portrait, and received personal instructions from the Emperor about the works on which he was engaged. From his sketch Dürer painted the portrait of Maximilian in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna, another version of which is in the German Museum at Nuremberg. Melanchthon has recorded how the Emperor once tried to show Dürer the design which he wished the artist to carry out. The charcoal with which he was drawing would, however, keep breaking in his hand, until Dürer took the charcoal, and finished the



*Page from the "Book of Hours," designed by A. Dürer for the Emperor Maximilian.
From a Lithograph by J. N. Strixner.*

drawing without breaking the charcoal. Maximilian asked how he managed to do this, to which Dürer replied that it was within his province to draw, but that the Emperor had other and more important tasks to perform. "Juxta illud proverbium," adds Melanchthon, "aliud est sceptrum, aliud plectrum." At Augsburg Dürer drew portraits of Albrecht of Brandenburg, the enlightened and cultivated Cardinal Archbishop of Mainz, from which drawing he afterwards made the two well-known engravings. There also he came into personal relations with another High Church dignitary, Matthäus Lang, Cardinal Archbishop of Salzburg, from whom he received commissions. Maximilian moreover on this occasion went near to repaying Dürer for his work by an order on the Town Council for a sum of 200 florins due to imperial chest for taxes. But everything was stopped by the sudden death of the Emperor, *quem Deus opt. max. in numerum viventium referre velit* as the inscription runs on Dürer's portrait of the Emperor at Vienna.

The Town Council of Nuremberg, already compelled by imperial command to pay Dürer a pension out of the taxes, and who had no doubt made wry faces over the order to pay a further sum of 200 florins from the same source, gladly availed themselves of the Emperor's death to cancel this order. Dürer in vain protested, offering to pledge his old house "Unter der Vesten" to the Council as a security. Not only did they refuse to pay the money in question, but there seems to have been some discussion as to whether they were liable to continue paying Dürer's annual pension of 100 florins without a renewal of the imperial deed of command. So Dürer made up his mind that there was nothing to be done but to leave Nuremberg and go to Aix-la-Chapelle, where the new Emperor was to be crowned, in the hope of being admitted to a personal interview with the Emperor, and of getting Maximilian's deed ratified by his successor. To this venture he was probably also impelled by his wife, Agnes, who, in despite of the difficulties of travelling in those days, determined to accompany him on his travels.

It was a venturesome journey for Dürer to take, for he had to lay aside his graving tools as well as his palette and easel for the time. Baggage in those days had to be reduced to its lowest possible scale on a journey, most of which had to be done by boat or on horseback. Packets of engravings and woodcuts, copies of his famous "books," great and small,

formed part of his equipment, together with sketch-books of a small size to be filled with minute drawings executed with the silver point, and of a larger size to admit of portrait-drawings freely drawn in charcoal. Dürer however left, this time, no mouths to fill at home. His beloved old

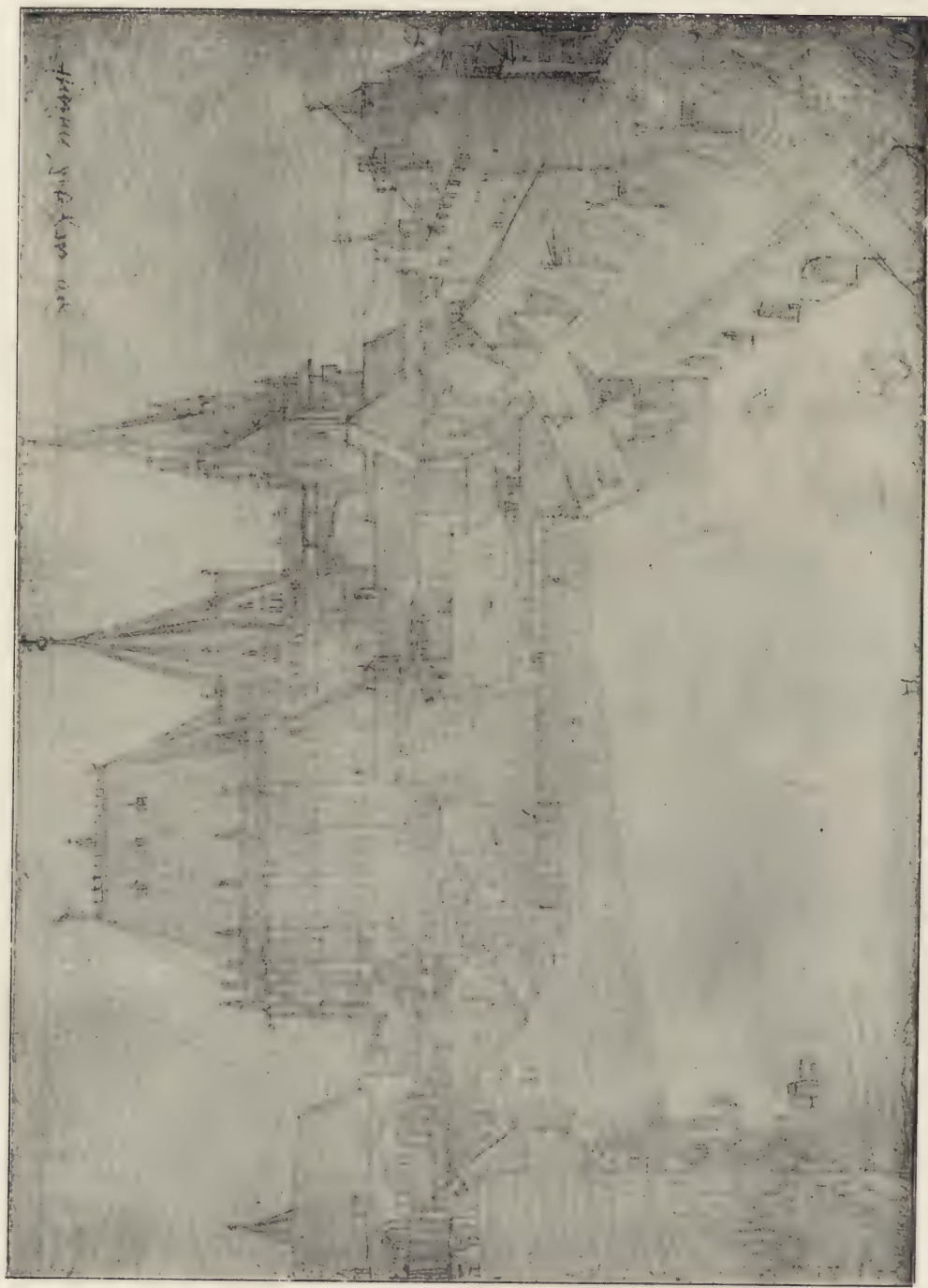


Design for a Spoon. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

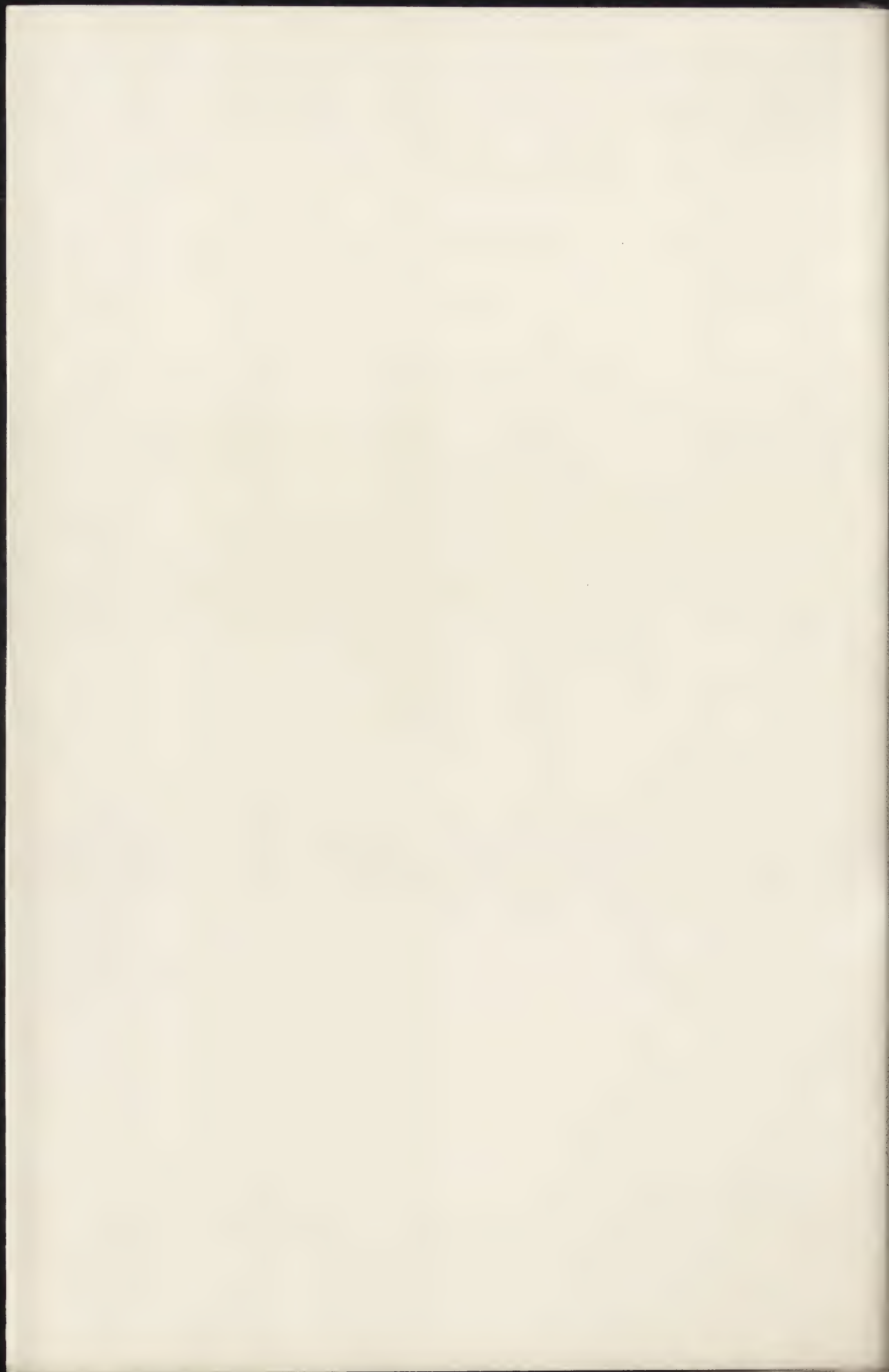
mother had died on May 17, 1514. His young brother, Hans, was well started as a painter. Hieronymus Andreae, the wood-engraver, was probably left to look after the sale of Dürer's engravings. Pirkheimer probably as before agreed to look after Dürer's finances during his absence.

Dürer and his wife arrived at Antwerp in August 1520, and were

most warmly received by the artists in that town. Dürer's journal of his travels records that he did his best to pay his way by the sale of his engravings, and by executing immediate commissions for drawing portraits, coats-of-arms, etc. At Antwerp he notes that he drew portraits of Jobst Planckfeldt, his host; Felix Hungersperg, the lute-player; the Bombelli, a Genoese family settled in Antwerp; and Nikolas Kratzer of Munich, astronomer to King Henry VIII. of England, whose portrait has also been preserved to us by Hans Holbein. At Brussels, among others, he drew Meister Bernhard, painter to the Lady Margaret (better known as Bernhard van Orley), and Erasmus, as he says, "once more." Returning to Antwerp he drew, among others, the painter Jakob of Lübeck, and the brothers Von Roggendorf, for whom also he drew a large heraldic book-plate. In October of the same year Dürer made his way to Aix-la-Chapelle, where the Emperor was crowned, and succeeded in obtaining the chief object of his journey,—the renewal of the pension granted to him by Maximilian. There also he notes various portraits drawn "in charcoal" or "in my sketch-book," including that of Peter von Enden, his host. He then returned by Cologne and Emmerich, travelling by boat along the Rhine to Antwerp. From Antwerp in December Dürer made an expedition to Zierikzee on the coast of Holland, and he kept his pencil and paint well employed upon that journey. Though he failed in his object, which was to see a whale which had been stranded on the sea, he may have seen or copied the description of the walrus drawn by him and now in the British Museum. It is not impossible that this may have been the animal in question, for the word *walfisch* is used somewhat generally for such beasts, and there is nothing in the drawing to denote that it was drawn from life. The following six months he spent at Antwerp, where he was in great favour, and no doubt found that trade was good. So highly indeed was Dürer esteemed at Antwerp, that the Council offered him 300 Philipsgulden a year, a good house, and immunity from taxes, if he would only settle there. He notes in his journal the names of many persons whom he drew in "black chalk," "hard chalk," "in metal point," "black and white pencil," or "charcoal," and in consequence of his long stay he was able to complete some of these portraits in oils. Among the persons portrayed were "Master Jean, good marble sculptor," in black chalk, perhaps Jan D'Heere, the sculptor



View of Aix-la-Chapelle. From a Leaf of Dürer's Sketch-book in the British Museum.



of Ghent, and father of Lucas D'Heere, the portrait-painter ; Cornelius Grapheus, in hard chalk ; Bernhard of Brussels (Bernhard van Orley), painted in oils, which portrait is now in the Royal Picture Gallery at Dresden ; Meister Joachim, "the good landscape painter," in metal point, *i.e.* Joachim Patinir, the painter, from which drawing a good engraving was made, erroneously attributed to Dürer himself ; Thomas Bologna of Rome, in charcoal, *i.e.* Tommaso Vincidor of Bologna, a former pupil



A Walrus. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

of Raphael at Rome, who painted in turn a portrait of Dürer which has been engraved. At Bruges in April 1821 Dürer drew the portrait of Jan Prost (Prevost), a well-known painter there. At Ghent he was immensely impressed by Van Eyck's *Adoration of the Lamb*. Returning to Antwerp he notes drawing in May "an English nobleman's portrait" in charcoal, and in July Meister Lukas van Leyden in metal point. Dürer's meeting with his greatest contemporary rival in engraving is an interesting incident in the history of art. This "metal-point" portrait of Lukas is in the Musée Wicar at Lille ; Dürer however drew another portrait of

him in charcoal, which has lately passed (1896) from the collection of the Earl of Warwick into that of Mr. Salting.

In July, "on our Lady's Visitation, as I was just about to leave Antwerp, the King of Denmark sent to me to come to him at once, and take his portrait, which I did in charcoal. I also did that of his servant Anton; and I was made to dine with the King, and he behaved graciously to me." The next day Dürer and his wife travelled to Brussels in the suite of King Christian, in order to paint his portrait in oils. "I noticed," says Dürer, "how the people of Antwerp marvelled greatly when they saw the King of Denmark, to find him such a manly handsome man, and come hither through his enemy's land with only two attendants. I saw too, how the Emperor rode forth from Brussels to meet him, and received him honourably with great pomp. Then I saw the noble costly banquet, which the Emperor and Lady Margaret held next day in his honour. On the Sunday before Margaret's the King of Denmark gave a great banquet to the Emperor, Lady Margaret, and the Queen of Spain, and he bade me in and I dined there also. I paid 12 stivers for the King's frame, and I painted the King's portrait in oil, he having given me 30 florins. I gave 2 stivers to the lad, Bartholomaeus by name, who rubbed the colours for me." This portrait of King Christian of Denmark has disappeared; but there is a metal-point drawing in the British Museum which seems to be a profile portrait of the king. From Brussels and his royal host Dürer started back on his homeward journey, reaching Nuremberg after a year's absence about midsummer in 1521. He had accomplished the chief object of his journey. The confirmation of his pension was in his wallet, but he was dissatisfied with the financial results of his journey; and his health, never very strong, had been severely undermined by a fever, contracted during his journey to the malarious coast of Holland.

At Madrid there is a portrait painted by Dürer in 1521, and one of the finest of his works. It has been conjectured to be a portrait of Hans Imhoff the elder, the Nuremberg banker, and to have been executed by Dürer upon his return to Nuremberg, in repayment for money advanced by Imhoff. The portrait, however, is closely allied to the portraits drawn and painted by Dürer at Antwerp earlier in that year, such as that of Bernhard van Orley, and more probably it was one

of his Antwerp acquaintances. May it not be the "very fine and careful portrait in oils of the treasurer Lorenz Sterk," worth 25 florins, painted in May 1821, and presented to the treasurer in return for 20 florins and 1 florin *trinkgeld* to Susanna, his wife's maid?

Dürer returned to Nuremberg full of honour, but his health was broken, and his life-work nearly done. The Town Council, finding the walls of the great room in the Rathhaus in need of fresh decoration,



Sketch of a Dog. From a Leaf of A. Durer's Sketch-book in the British Museum.

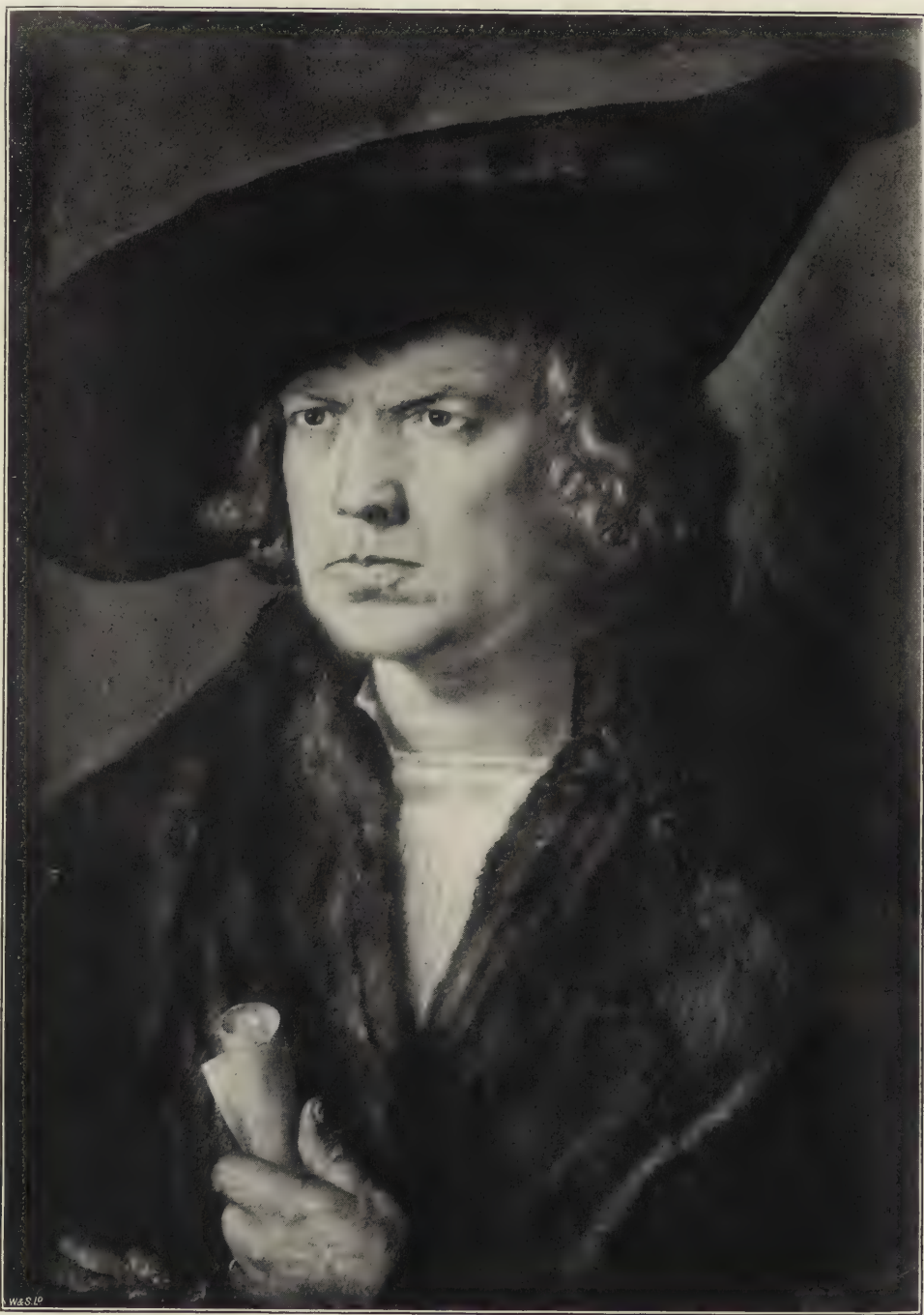
invited Dürer to design decorative paintings for them. In former years this commission might have been accepted with enthusiasm; but now Dürer appears to have taken little interest in it, for he did not do more than supply the designs, leaving the actual painting to be carried out by Georg Pencz and other pupils. The time-worn subject of the *Calumny of Apelles* formed one design, and for another Dürer used his unfinished sketch of Maximilian's *Triumphal Car*, one of the commissions broken off by the Emperor's death, which he now completed, and also issued in woodcut form in 1522. But painting on a large

scale never suited Dürer's method. He became more and more of a home-worker, working at his books on Proportion, Painting, Fortification, etc., and preparing them for the press. Copperplate-engraving he almost entirely abandoned; but his drawings for wood-engraving, especially those of a heraldic or ornamental nature, became very numerous. He was perplexed by the religious troubles of the time, and the disturbances which took place in Nuremberg affected him very closely. His foreman and pupils were all imprisoned, and some expelled from the town. Such times were an ill soil for the flourishing of art. As Dürer became more of a philosopher he became less of a creative artist. The problems which he tried to solve were of an infinite nature, the veritable "*Fata Morgana*" of art. Truth and beauty, who shall define them! As the ideal seemed to him to become more intelligible, Dürer became dissatisfied with his own works. Melanchthon, who was much at Nuremberg about this time with Pirkheimer, and who knew and loved Dürer, says that "Dürer, the painter, a man of remarkable talent and virtue, was wont to say that, when young, he liked bright and florid pictures, and could not help delighting to see the brilliance and variety of the colouring. But later when he came to look upon Nature as an old man and endeavoured to get a closer view of her native face, he began to understand that the greatest glory of art lay in her simplicity. And as he could not wholly attain to this, he said that he had ceased to admire his own works, as he had once done, but that now he groaned when he looked on his paintings and thought of his own deficiencies."

Truly the shades of evening were closing over Dürer's life, and threw a sombre tone over it. His letters at this period show a rather despondent and discontented state of mind. Money matters were an anxiety to him, both in the present and for the future. The following letter to the Town Council is a severe indictment of their behaviour towards him :—

PRUDENT, HONOURABLE, AND WISE, MOST GRACIOUS MASTERS—During long years, by hard-working pains and labour, with the help of God's blessing, I have saved out of my earnings as much as 1000 guldens Rhenish, which I should now be glad to invest for my support.

I know, indeed, that your Honours are not often wont at the present time to grant interest at the rate of one gulden for twenty; and I have been told that before



Portrait of Imboff (?). Madrid Gallery. From a Photograph by J. A. Stein.



now other applications of a like kind have been refused. It is not, therefore, without scruple that I address your Honours in this matter. Yet my necessities impel me to prefer this request to your Honours, and I am encouraged to do so above all by the particularly gracious favour which I have always received from your Honourable Wisdoms (*Weisheit*), as well as by the following considerations.

Your Wisdoms know I have always hitherto shown myself dutiful, willing, and zealous in all matters that concerned your Wisdoms and the common weal of the town. You know, moreover, how before now I have served many individual members of the Council as well as of the community here, gratuitously rather than for pay, when they stood in need of my help, art, and labour. I can also write with truth that, during the thirty years I have stayed at home, I have not received from people in this town work worth 500 gulden—truly a trifling and ridiculous sum—and not a fifth part of that has been profit. I have on the contrary earned and attained all my poor means (which, God knows, has grown irksome to me) from princes, lords, and other foreign persons; moreover I do nothing but spend in this town what I have earned from foreigners.

Doubtless also your Honours remember that at one time the Emperor Maximilian of most praiseworthy memory, in return for the manifold services which I had performed for him year after year, of his own impulse and imperial charity, wanted to make me free of taxes in this town. At the instance however of my Lords, the Elders, who treated with me in the matter in the name of the Council, I willingly resigned that privilege to the said my Lords in order to honour and to maintain their privileges, usages and rights.

Again nineteen years ago the Signoria of Venice offered to appoint me to an office and to give me a salary of 200 ducats a year. So too only a short time ago, when I was in the Netherlands, the Council of Antwerp would have given me 300 Philipsgulden a year, kept me there free of taxes, and honoured me with a well-built house; and besides I should have been paid in addition at both places for all the work I might have done for the gentry. But I declined all this because of the particular love and affection which I bear to your honourable Wisdoms and to my fatherland, this honourable town, preferring, as I did, to live under your Wisdoms in a moderate way rather than to be rich and held in honour in other places.

It is therefore my most submissive prayer to your Honours that you will be pleased graciously to take these facts into consideration, and to receive from me on my account these 1000 gulden, paying me fifty gulden a year as interest. I could indeed place them with other respectable parties here and elsewhere, but I should prefer to see them in the hands of your Wisdoms. I and my wife will then, now that we are both growing daily older, feebler and more helpless, possess the certainty of a fitting household for our needs; and we shall experience thereby, as formerly, your honourable Wisdoms' favour and good-will. To merit this from your Honours with all my powers I shall ever be found willing.—Your Wisdoms' willing and obedient burgher,

ALBRECHT DÜRER.

Portrait-painting was almost the only form of painting which Dürer had practised. One of the most elaborate and interesting of his drawings is the portrait of Henry Parker, Lord Morley, who in 1523 visited Nuremberg on an embassy from Henry VIII. to the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria; this portrait, which is more Holbeinesque in character than his other drawn portraits, is now in the British Museum. The portraits executed about this period are wrought with a careful intensity which is almost painful. One of the most important is that of Hieronymus Holzschuher, sold a few years ago by the family to the Berlin Picture Gallery. In this every detail, every hair, every stroke of the brush is so minute that the result is far from being attractive. The painter seems to be trying to make a realistic painting interpret an idea and not a merely living fact. Another portrait of this date is that of Johann Kleeberger, which passed from Pirkheimer's collection through the Imhoffs to Rudolph II., and is now at Vienna. Another is that of Jacob Muffel, now also at Berlin.

One great imaginative creation however was still to be carried out. For years Dürer's mind had been pondering over his ideas of human perfection in mind and body. Through this channel, he thought, the Divine can only be taught and known. The four Temperaments presented themselves to his mind as cardinal motives for the conveyance of this truth. He had already tried to express this in his famous engravings; and he now prepared to deliver the same sermon, as his valedictory message in painting. So in 1526 he finished two great upright panels with figures of St. Peter and St. John on one, St. Paul and St. Mark on the other, as apostolic preachers to his fellow-citizens. To each figure are attached words from Luther's translation of the Bible, written by the apostles themselves, words of warning and rebuke to all men and all time. This was Dürer's final gift and message to his people, which he offered to the Town Council with the following letter :—

PRUDENT, HONOURABLE, WISE, DEAR MASTERS—I have been intending for a long time past to show my respect for your Wisdoms by the presentation of some humble picture of mine as a remembrance, but I have been prevented from so doing by the imperfection and insignificance of my works, for I felt that with such I could not well stand before your Wisdoms. Now however that I have just lately painted a panel upon which I have bestowed more trouble than on any other paintings, I considered none more worthy to keep it as a reminiscence than your Wisdoms.



Henry Parker, Lord Morley. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

Therefore I present it to your Wisdoms with the humble and urgent prayer that you will favourably and graciously receive it, and will be and continue, as I have ever found you, my kind and dear Masters. Thus shall I be diligent to serve your Wisdoms in all humility.—Your Wisdoms' humble
ALBRECHT DÜRER.

These paintings were Dürer's last important work. They were finished in 1526; and on April 6, 1528, the great artist was dead. His soul had fled upon

her immortal way
Home to the original source of Light and intellectual day.

CRASHAW.

In his own opinion his work was incomplete, his goal unattained. Posterity has formed a different opinion. Had Dürer lived longer, he might have said, in the words of a later writer, of his search for Truth—

I have sought, for long years I have laboured, but I have not found her. I have not rested, I have not repined, and I have not seen her; now my strength is gone. Where I lie down worn out, other men will stand, young and fresh. By the steps that I have cut they will climb; by the stairs that I have built they will mount. They will mount and on *my* work; they will climb, and by *my* stair! They will find her and through me! And no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. (O. Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm*.)

It is difficult to speak with certainty about the works of Dürer during the last few years of life. Illness and anxiety certainly dulled and blunted the skill of his hand and the acuteness of his intellect. It seems certain that he left a large number of drawings which were transferred on to wood, and published under the superintendence of his widow, and of Hieronymus Andreae, his wood-engraver. Many woodcuts of this date, which are assigned to Dürer, may, even when unworthy of him, be based on some of his designs. A certain number of paintings also remain which may have been designed by him and carried out by his assistants, such as the *Procession to Calvary*, a study in *grisaille*, versions of which, signed and dated 1527, are in the Dresden Gallery, the collection of Sir Francis Cook at Richmond, and elsewhere. A *Madonna and Child with a Pear* in the Uffizi at Florence is probably the work of Dürer's own hand, being signed and dated 1526; in this painting Dürer shows, in addition to his adherence to his canons of proportion, an inclination to revert from his usual realistic type of female beauty to the more conventional Virgins of the Flemish and Schongauer schools.

Many paintings exist which bear the name of Dürer, and not unfrequently his well-known signature, but which reveal no traces of his



Head of Old Man. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

master-hand. Many are but renderings of his better-known engravings in 'colours, some mere *pasticci* on his drawings. An exhaustive inspection of the collection of pictures in the royal, princely, and noble houses in

Germany and Austria might lead to the disinterment of a few more Madonnas, portraits, or other paintings of minor importance, his "ordinary paintings" as he would have called them himself. To the number of "Great Pictures" it is unlikely that any addition will be made.

Dürer stands, as it were, on the watershed between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, both in the progress of art and in the development of human intellect. Intensely conservative by nature, he yet opened out new roads and paths in art, along which his successors have journeyed and are still journeying in the search for that ideal of Truth and Beauty which Dürer felt that he himself should never reach. He writes himself that

Much will hereafter be written about subjects and refinements of painting. Sure am I that notable men will arise, all of whom will write both well and better about this art and will teach it better than I. For I myself hold my art at a very mean value ; for I know what my faults are. Let every man, therefore, strive to better these my errors according to his powers. Would to God it were possible for me to see the work and art of the mighty masters to come, who are yet unborn, for I know that I might be improved.

Again he writes :—

God sometimes granteth unto a man to learn and know how to make a thing, the like whereof in his day no other can contrive ; and perhaps for a long time none hath been before him, and after him another cometh not soon.

Truly may it be said in the history of German art that "after him another cometh not soon" ; for Dürer remains the typical German artist even at the close of the nineteenth century.

Rubens, who represents the opposite pole of art to Dürer, said of himself, "Je confesse d'estre par un instinct naturel plus propre à faire des ouvrages bien grandes que des petits curiositez." Dürer might have said the exact reverse about himself. Trained originally as a goldsmith, then as an engraver, his work is full of "petits curiositez," and his great pictures are sometimes built up of these with some detriment to the harmony of the whole composition. His decorative instinct caused him to shun open spaces in his paintings and engravings, and these he filled with his *Traumwerk* or other fanciful additions. It is chiefly in his drawings that the wonderful freedom of his hand can be seen. On whatever material or with whatever instrument they are executed they show

largeness and copiousness of imagination. Sometimes they are in themselves carefully-finished pictures, which, if magnified to any extent, would



Portrait of a Young Man. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

have little to gain or lose by the process, so complete are they in themselves. Such are the series known as the *Green Passion* at Vienna, drawn

in 1504. The slightest sketches or studies with the pen or silver point are full of individual character ; and the bold rapid portrait studies in black chalk or charcoal were the forerunners of a whole school of similar drawings. The greater part of his drawings, which were made for his own use, appear to have passed into the possession of his life-long friend, Pirkheimer, perhaps handed over by Dürer's widow to redeem the many financial obligations under which Dürer lay to his friend. The sketch-books used by Dürer in the Netherlands seem to have passed into the possession of the Pfinzing family, and were dispersed by their next owner. At Pirkheimer's death the whole of his collections, including the paintings and drawings by Dürer, became the property of the Imhoff family, the bankers and usurers of Nuremberg. The Imhoffs, as befits a good steady money-making firm, seem to have regarded Dürer's works as a marketable commodity. At the end of the sixteenth century, when the Emperor Rudolph II. was forming his great collection of works of art and curiosities, the Imhoffs, knowing his intense admiration for the works of Dürer, pressed upon him the collection of paintings and drawings which they possessed. The Town Council of Nuremberg seem to have followed suit with the paintings which were immediately under their control, if not actually in their possession. In a short time Rudolph became possessed of the bulk of Dürer's paintings and drawings at Prague or Vienna. Several of the paintings remain in the imperial collection to this day ; and a large portion of the drawings now forms the nucleus of what is known as the "Albertina" collection at Vienna. Another portion of the Imhoff collection found its way through a collector in the Netherlands, perhaps through one of the Austrian governors, into that of Sir Hans Sloane, and is now in the print-room at the British Museum. These two collections, together with the great collection, which official industry and acumen have brought together at Berlin, are the best field for the study of Dürer's work as a draughtsman, although in some of the smaller public or private collections some of the most remarkable examples are to be found.

The good citizens of Nuremberg continued their work of converting Dürer's works into hard cash whenever the opportunity occurred. In 1585 the Town Council persuaded or compelled the governors of the Landauer almshouses to sell to the Emperor Rudolph their great painting

of *All Saints*, replacing it by a copy which, by way of carrying out the deception, was inserted in the original frame designed by Dürer. The *Adam* and *Eve* also appear to have passed into the same imperial hands. In 1627 the Council sold to the Elector Maximilian of Bavaria the two great panels of the *Four Preachers*, Dürer's last gift to



Sketch for a Book-Plate. From a Drawing in the British Museum.

his native town, and replaced them by copies. The long inscriptions from the Bible were cut off from the original panels, and added on below the copies. A few years before, in 1613, they had presented the same Elector with the beautiful Baumgärtner altar-piece, which was torn from its place in St. Catherine's Church at Nuremberg. The two *Descents from the Cross*

followed in the same channel; and the Praun collection at Nuremberg yielded up the portrait of Wolgemut and the portrait of Hans Dürer. Worst of all, the portrait of their beloved and honoured citizen, the world-famous portrait of Dürer by himself, which had become actually the property of the Town Council, was lent by them to a local painter to copy; this ingenious craftsman sawed the panel in half, and glued his copy on to the back, on which were the town seal and other marks of ownership, and sold the original to King Ludwig I. of Bavaria. The worthy magistrates never discovered the fraud, or pretended not to, and this copy hangs to-day at Nuremberg, a monument of dishonour and fraud. Gradually Nuremberg divested itself of every work by Dürer which it could, and rejoiced in its copies and its cash. Ludwig I. of Bavaria took pity on its denuded condition and gave back to it as a gift the *Descent from the Cross*, known as the Peller altar-piece, and also apparently returned from Schleissheim the *Hercules and the Stymphalian Birds*. With the over-daubed paintings of Charlemagne and Sigismund, these appear to be the only authenticated paintings by Dürer in his native town at the present day. Three hundred years after Dürer's death a statue was erected to him in Nuremberg, and his house is now preserved and shown as a national relic. Yet little more than fifty years after the erection of this statue, in 1884, the citizens allowed the famous "Holzschuher" portrait, the last great work by Dürer which the town possessed, to be sold by the family, to whom it still belonged, to the picture gallery at Berlin. Truly a prophet hath little honour in his own country!

In estimating Dürer's work as a painter it is necessary to distinguish between the paintings executed in his workshop and those done entirely with his own hand. In the early part of his career Dürer seems to have employed as assistants Hans Leonhard Schäuflin, who worked entirely under Dürer's influence; Hans Baldung, nicknamed Grün, a Swabian artist, with much originality, although greatly influenced by Dürer, to whom he was bound by ties of great friendship; Albrecht Altdorfer of Ratisbon, and Hans Süss of Kulmbach. These artists were all but a few years junior to Dürer. Later in life Dürer employed more actually as pupils the two Behams, Barthel and Hans Sebald, and Georg Pencz of Nuremberg, and Heinrich Aldegrevier of Paderborn.

These artists were pupils of Dürer in engraving as well as drawing and painting, and formed the group which is known as the "Little Masters." They carried on the tradition of Dürer for many years. As its influence became less, German art lost all life and originality, and ceased to exercise any office except that of the most menial character.

Dürer's drawings remained, for many years after his death, subjects for the closest imitation by his immediate pupils and later German artists. Even in the great Imhoff collection there were numerous works attributed to Dürer which must be regarded as spurious. Some artists, like Hans Hofmann, were so skilful in imitating Dürer's most minute and elaborate drawings, especially his coloured drawings of natural objects, that only a skilled eye can distinguish with certainty between the copy and the original. In the school of Dürer also many drawings were made which, although thoroughly Düreresque in character, must be set down as mere *pasticci* and imitations. The student's task therefore is not an easy one; but Dürer's personality in all his work is so strong that the eye quickly learns to reject anything which does not appeal to it at once as the master's work.

Dürer handled every possible sort of method in his drawings, from the boldest charcoal outline to the most delicate silver point, from the finest pen-work to the freest possible sketch. Working as an artist in black and white, he at the same time shows his delight in bright and vivid colours. As is shown from the story told above of Giovanni Bellini, his *stroke* was famous and regarded with amazement. Many artists have tried to rival Dürer in his delineation of hair, but few with success. Among the best may be reckoned our own living artist, Frederick Sandys.

It is natural to compare Albrecht Dürer as an artist with his two most noted contemporaries in German art, Hans Holbein and Lucas Cranach. In good truth, if he must be compared with any artist, it should be with that little-understood and much-underrated artist, Hans Holbein, the elder. The younger Holbein belonged to a later generation; he was entirely the child of the Reformation, the friend of the humanists, standing on this side of that great cleavage in the history of Europe, which Dürer never surmounted. Lucas Cranach too, while preserving more of the *sauvagerie* of mediæval art, became almost wholly wedded to the cause of Luther. As a portrait-painter, Cranach

has some affinity to Dürer, but is entirely lacking in the strong individuality which led Dürer to impose something of his own personality upon every one of his sitters, somewhat like Burne-Jones at the present day. Holbein gives a more direct human likeness to his portraits. He shows us his sitters as we should have seen them ourselves; not as Dürer did, who reflects them to us from the mirror of his own mind. Holbein seldom fails to appeal to the general spectator. Of Dürer it might be said, as a modern writer has said of Ford Madox Brown, "he must either repel strongly or appeal strongly."

Dürer may, without exaggeration, be said to be one of the greatest artists that the world has ever produced. He even succeeded where he failed; for, in the search for Truth and Beauty, to fail where Dürer failed argues a high pitch of excellence on the part of an artist. Even at the remote interval of more than three and a half centuries, the lament of his faithful friend, of his Pirkheimer, strikes an echo in many hearts. Writing to their common friend, Ulrich Varnbuler, the subject of one of Dürer's best-known portrait drawings, the sorrowing Pirkheimer says:—

Obiit Albertus noster, Udalrice optime! proh factorum ordo memorabilis, proh misera conditio humana, proh dura inclementia mortis! Vir talis tantusque nobis ereptus est, quum interim tot inutiles ac nullius frugis homines fortuna perpetua vitae fruantur plus quam diuturna.

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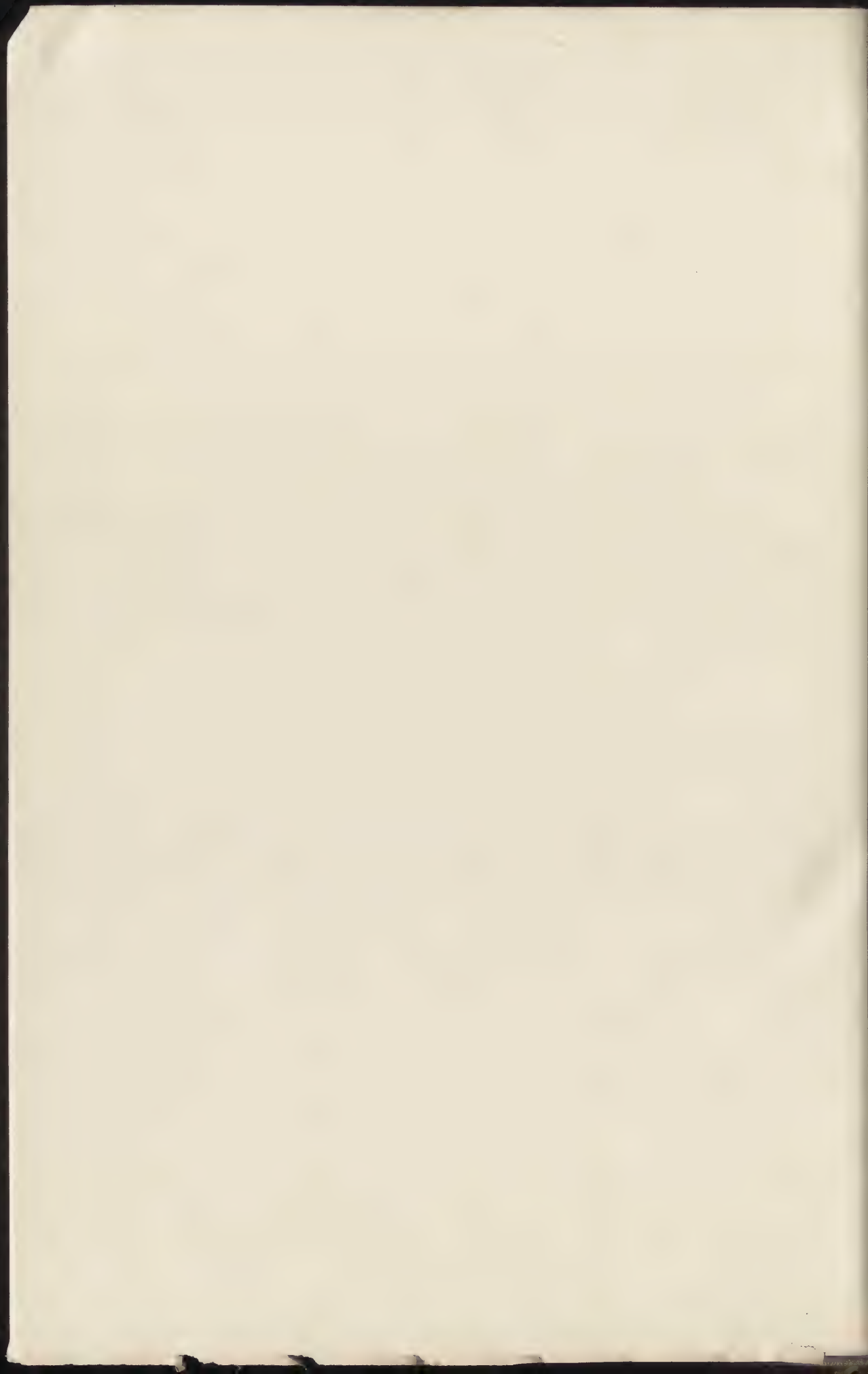
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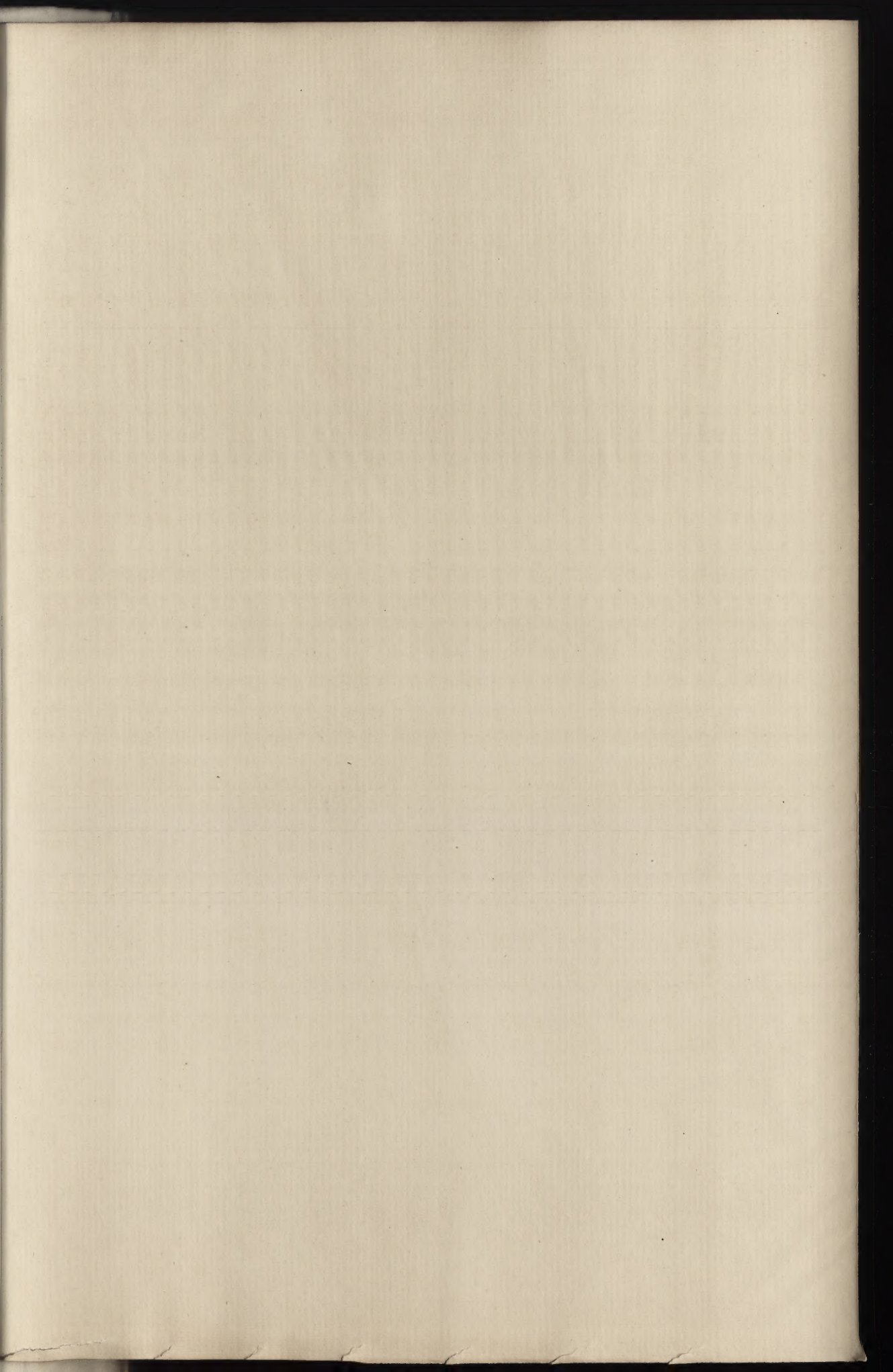
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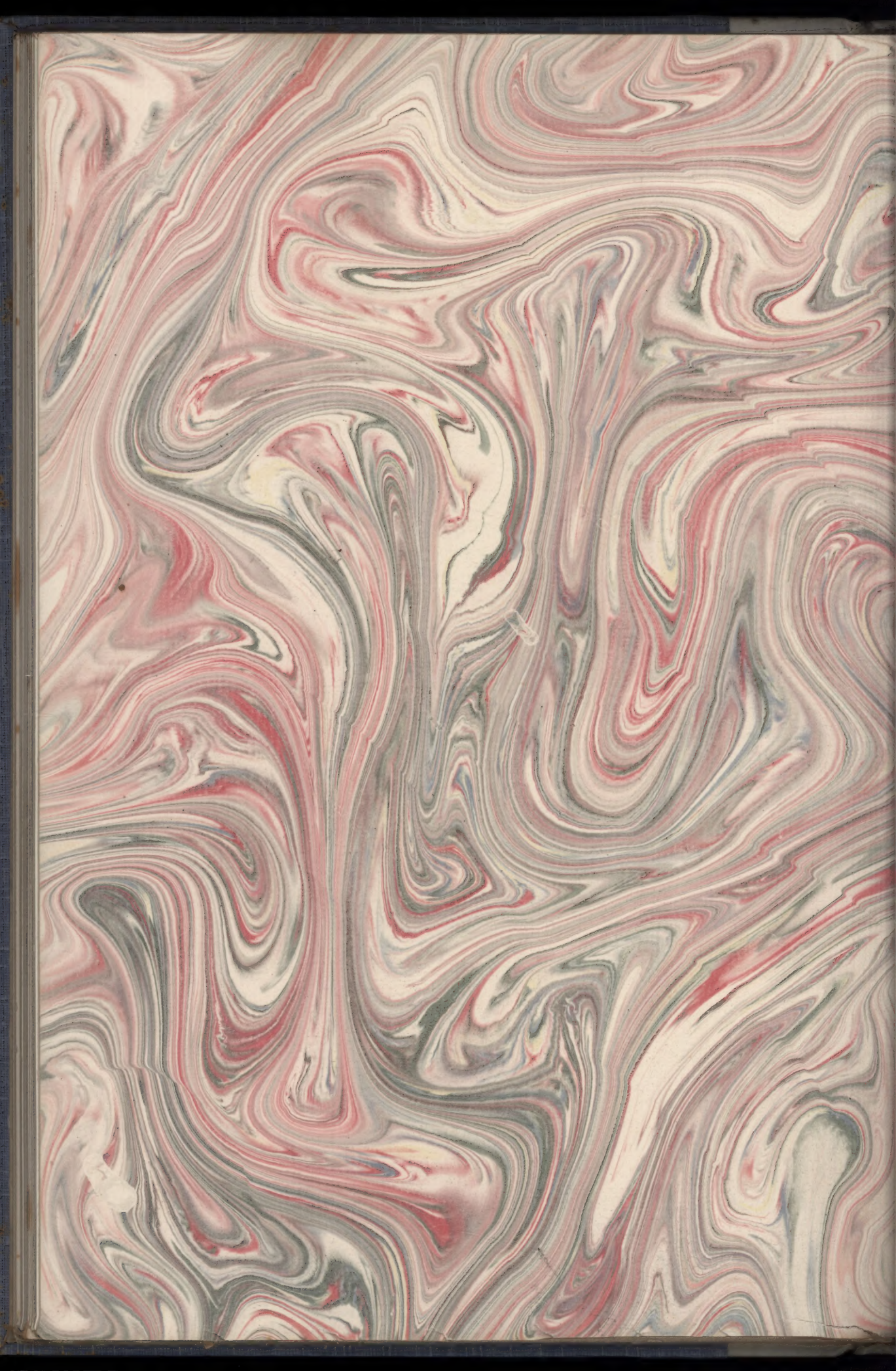


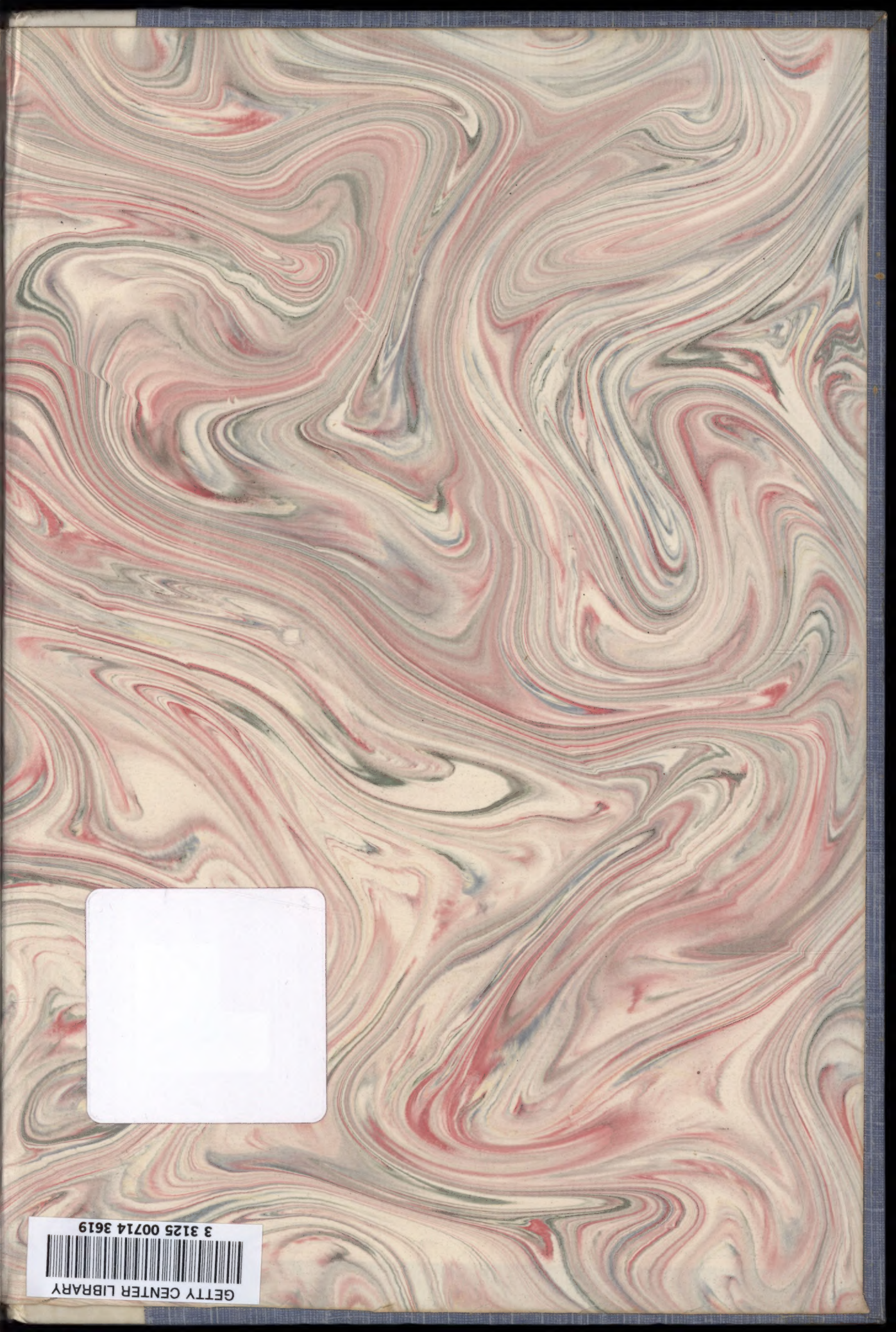




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